

*Dedicated to the memory of*

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## CHAPTER ONE

The enormous scholarly effort spent in trying to establish the so-called 'original' text of *Vālmiki's Rāmāyaṇa* and the various criteria proposed to sift the authentic from the spurious find their justification in the assumption that there once existed an original *written Rāmāyaṇa*. It is that assumption which, in the name of Calliope, is questioned today. One, of course, easily realizes the gravity of the problem, for it throws doubt on the validity of the classical approach to the Indian Epic. But if it can be shown that this approach is based on a gratuitous postulate, a new and richer understanding of the epic will emerge which will amply compensate for the loss of the fictitious 'original' text.

No one, I think, will question the fact that the *Rāmāyaṇa* as we know it today bears all the marks of oral poetry.<sup>1</sup> The epic songs relating to Rama were sung for centuries before the idea arose of putting them down in writing. As A.B. Lord has experimentally proved, the chief characteristic of oral tradition is its fluidity. Not only do the different singers sing different versions of the same song, but the same singer never repeats the same song in exactly the same form. The "singer of tales" is the guardian not of a verbal tradition, but of a spiritual tradition. He never claims to 'create' his songs: he has received them from his forbears together with the technique of singing. He is the people's articulate memory. Memory means fidelity to tradition; it never implies purely verbal repetition. The singer can increase or curtail the length of his performance, adapt new themes to his narrative and, in general, regulate his singing according to the mood of his audience. "To the singer the song, which cannot be changed (since to change it would, in his mind, be to tell an untrue story or to falsify history), is the essence of the story itself. His idea of stability, to which he is deeply devoted, does not

include the wording, which to him has never been fixed, nor the unessential parts of the story."<sup>3</sup>

When, as was the case with the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the oral tradition is spread over territories that are far apart, the epic songs, although sung in the same language, are bound to show linguistic differences due to local usage. Thus it is well known that Sanskrit was purer in Northern India than in the South. The archaic or popular forms of the Southern songs cannot be adduced as signs of greater antiquity: they indicate their different geographical origin. Both in the North and in the South, the oral tradition developed in different streams among communities of Rāma-ic faith. Itinerant bards established bonds of fraternity between the various groups, enabling thus each local community to enrich itself with the treasures of their distant fellow-believers. Gradually, in the course of several centuries, an enormous epic material came into existence, handed down orally from generation to generation and presenting a broad range of local variations both in language and in the treatment of legends.

What happened at the time when some people decided to put in writing a selection of that traditional material can be surmised by analogy with the circumstances that led to the writing down of the *Iliad*.

The testimony of ancient ceramic and pottery shows that a good number of Homeric themes were well known by the middle of the seventh century B.C., not only in Ionia, but also in the Aegean islands and on the Greek mainland. Ancient tradition tells us that Hipparchus, son of the tyrant Peisistratus, was the first to bring to Athens the written text of the Homeric poems. This gave rise to the legend that Peisistratus had collected in Athens the songs attributed to Homer and had arranged them into two great poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.<sup>4</sup> But this legend is rather late and its avowed aim is to eulogize Peisistratus as a model ruler and a patron of art and literature. It is more likely that Hipparchus brought from Ionia a text already fixed and had it copied by Attic scribes as the official text to be used in the Panathenaea festival.

We are thus brought back to Ionia at a time when there was reason to fear that the epic songs handed down by the oral tradition might perish unless they were committed to writing. This seems to indicate a decline in the vitality of the oral tradition and a new concern for some form of a literary ideal which writing alone could achieve. In accordance with that new ideal, the compilers thought it fit to attach to their final composition the name of a famous singer. They chose the name of Homer who was well known for two epic songs which had gained him a great popularity: 'The Wrath of Achilles' and 'The Return of Odysseus'. Limiting ourselves to the *Iliad*,

we can, by careful analysis, follow the main theme of the wrath of Achilles in its logical development if we read one after the other Books I, XI, XVI and XXII. The other twenty books of the *Iliad* have been woven into that basic pattern with varying degrees of consistency. This, of course, does not mean that they are less genuine, as epic songs, than the four basic books. They were probably dictated by different bards and the compilers were as anxious to preserve them as they were to perpetuate Homer's poem. From the literary point of view, they wanted one theme made famous by a great name. In their desire to save from oblivion the treasures of the oral tradition, they inserted in the framework of the main theme the other songs which they thought worth preserving. The execution of these two seemingly incompatible purposes was in some cases quite dexterous, in others clumsy. But they achieved just what they wanted and the very title they gave to their compilation is significant: *Iliad* means *The Song of Ilium*, i.e. the collection of songs celebrating the Trojan expedition. They must have eliminated a number of songs, because their insertion would have totally jeopardized the minimum unity which they were anxious to safeguard. Hence, Mazon's very wise remark: "Anyone who reads the *Iliad* without prejudice cannot escape the impression of a work possessing a real unity together with a perpetual incoherence. The arguments of the critics who claim that it is a master-piece of composition are as valid as those of the critics who see in it nothing but a hopeless patchwork."<sup>5</sup>

The compilation of the *Iliad* was probably not done in one day. But even if we could isolate from the rest the first redaction, that text would have nothing 'original' about it. It was not a new creation, but the written record of an oral tradition, the petrification of something which was fluid by nature. The bards themselves who agreed to dictate their songs never thought of themselves as 'authors': they were fully conscious of being the guardians of a tradition which did not belong to them. Critics belonging to a literate society find it difficult to grasp the protean character of the oral tradition. "Our real difficulty arises from the fact that, unlike the oral poet, we are not accustomed to thinking in terms of fluidity. We find it difficult to grasp something that is multiform. It seems to us necessary to construct an ideal text or to seek an original, and we remain dissatisfied with an ever-changing phenomenon. I believe that once we know the fact of oral composition we must cease trying to find an original of any traditional song," for "it is impossible to retrace the work of generations of singers to that moment when some singer first sang a particular song."<sup>6</sup>

In the case of the *Rāmāyana*, we are fortunate in this that we know much better than in the case of the *Iliad* the purpose of the first compilers.

They lived at a time when a new literary conception, that of the *kāvya*, as opposed to popular literature, had begun to captivate the mind of a literate elite. A *kāvya* is a well-knit narrative poem composed by a single author who is conscious of his talent and anxious to display it. Discovering in the Rama-ic oral tradition some of the literary conceits of which they were so fond, the early compilers conceived the possibility of selecting some of the songs and of presenting their collection as the *ādi-kāvya*. They did not realize that, by doing so, they betrayed the deeper meaning of the oral tradition, for "the traditional oral epic singer is not an artist; he is a seer. The patterns of thought that he has inherited came into being to serve not *art* but religion in its most basic sense. His balances, his antitheses, his similes and metaphors, his repetitions, and his sometimes seemingly wilful play with words, with morphology, and with phonology were not intended to be devices and conventions of Parnassus, but were techniques for emphasis of the potent symbol. Art appropriated the forms of oral narrative. ... Yet it turned its back on the traditional significance to contemplate the forms as if they were pure form, and from that contemplation to create new meanings."<sup>7</sup>

The art of *kāvya* was still in its infancy and far from having reached the degree of sophistication of the later exponents of the genre. The process of selection and compilation must have started at several places and, in each place, the compilers had to rely on the local oral material. Theirs was a two-fold task. The first was to choose from the treasures of the oral tradition the subject of a narrative which was sufficiently unified and not too unwieldy. Like the later *mahākāvya*-writers, but much more clumsily, they cut out a portion of the epic and called it *Rāmāyaṇa*, i.e. *The Journey of Rāma*. Under this title, they included *Rāma's* banishment, his struggle against Ravana and his victorious return to Ayodhya. The very size of the compilation together with the unmistakable stamp of oral poetry left on it show that the so-called 'original' text of the *Rāmāyaṇa* could not have been the work of a single poet engaged in writing a well-rounded artistic narrative poem. Yet, partly blinded by their literary ambition, the early compilers had no scruple in pruning the traditional songs from their too obvious mythological undertones. Theirs was the first attempt at secularizing the epic, and they made Narada their mouth-piece. Far from representing the original epic, Narada's *anukramaṇī* in the first canto of the Balakanda is a truncated version of the true story of Rāma.

The compilers' second task was to find an *ādi-kavi* for their *ādi-kāvya*. They chose Valmiki who, like Homer, was a celebrated bard and sage. Desirous to confer credibility to their choice, they orchestrated it in a very elegant manner. Valmiki was described as a poet seeking for

a worthy subject of composition. The poet's requirements reflect exactly the heroic ideal of a post-oral humanistic mentality:

Ko'nvamin sāmpratam loke gunavān kaśca vīryavān  
dharmajñāśca kṛtājñāśca satyavākya dṛḍhavrata  
cāritreṇa ca ko yuktaḥ sarvabhūteṣu ko hitaḥ  
vidvān kaḥ kaḥ samarthaśca kaścaikapriyadarśanaḥ  
ātmanvān ko jītakrodho matimān ko'naśūyakaḥ  
kasya bibhyati devāśca jātaroṣasya saṃyuge  
etad icchāmyaham śrotuṃ paraṃ kautūhalaṃ hi me  
Maharṣe tvam samartho'si jñātum evaṃvidham naraṃ.

*Bālakāṇḍa 1, 2-5*

[ In this modern world of ours, who is the virtuous and brave hero  
dutiful, grateful, true to his word, faithful to his promises,  
endowed with character and beneficent to all beings?  
Who is wise, who is capable, who is handsome?  
Self-possessed and controlled, intelligent and without envy?  
Whom do the gods themselves fear when his anger is aroused in battle?  
That is what I want to hear, that is what I am most anxious to know.  
O Great sage, you certainly know of such a man. ]

Narada replies: Rama "is your man, the flawless hero, endowed with all the virtues of mind, heart and body." Then, in about sixty *ślokas* he gives him an outline of the story from Rama's banishment to his return to Ayodhya. The subject of the *kāvya* being provided, the poet is now prepared for his task: the cruel death of the amorous *krauñca* fills his heart with compassion and, under the impact of deep emotion, his speech turns spontaneously into poetry. The finishing touch of the picture is Brahma's divine injunction which consecrates Valmiki as author of the *Rāmakathā*—

Na te vāg anṛtā kāvye kācid atra bhaviṣyati  
kuru Rāmakathāṃ puṇyāṃ ślokabaddhāṃ manoramāṃ.

*Bālakāṇḍa II, 34*

[ In composing this poem no word will ever betray you;  
put into *ślokas* the holy and charming story of Rāma. ]

The fiction is complete Valmiki unaware of the existence of the Rama-story and therefore cut off from the whole oral tradition; the absence, before Valmiki's touching experience, of poetic language; the divine inspiration which will enable him to fill in the bare outline given by Narada:

Dharmātmano guṇavato loke Rāmasya dhīmataḥ  
vṛttam kathaya dhīrasya yathā te Nāradaśrutam.  
Vaidichyāścaiva yad vṛttam prakāśam yadi vā rahaḥ  
tucchāpyaviditam sarvaṃ viditam te bhaviṣyati.

[ Tell to the world the story of pious and wise Rāma,  
that steadfast hero, as you have heard it from Nārada.  
There is also the story of Sītā: though you ignore everything of it,  
it will be made known to you in its obvious and hidden meaning. ]

Was there a more ingenious way to make a compilation appear as an original *kāvya*? It may safely be assumed that the first two cantos of the *Bālakāṇḍa* are the artefact of those compilers whom their love for literature had alienated from the spirit of the oral tradition.

Yet, as in the case of the *Iliad*, so here also, literature was not the concern of all. The communities in which the songs of Rama were sung were not communities of *literati*, but of devotees. As the fashion of writing spread, some of their members saw to it that Rama be restored to his pristine divine stature. Hence the gradual growth of the written text. The numerous portions which the critics consider interpolations constitute, in fact, a restoration of the original figure of Rama as it has been handed down for many generations before any kind of written text existed. As we have shown above, the first written text is not a beginning, but rather the conclusion of a long process the real meaning of which was lost to those whose minds were set on *kāvya*-writing. In the first two cantos of the *Bālakāṇḍa* they tried their best to make it appear as a beginning, as an original, but the fictitious character of their performance is obvious to anybody who has been able to escape from "that insularity in time which, blinding men to the uniqueness both of their own and of past ages, drives them to impose upon the past the fleeting image of their own preoccupations."<sup>8</sup> The various *anukramaṇīs* found in the *Rāmāyaṇa* are a clear witness of the return to the sources of tradition which Narada's outline had purposely neglected. A remarkable feature of the second *anukramaṇī* found in the third canto is the way in which it is introduced. Unfortunately the Baroda edition has relegated it to the critical notes (see 1.3.1, note 152) probably because its import was incompatible with the chosen critical method. This is the *sloka* in question

Śrutvā pūrvaṃ kāvyabijam devaṛṣe Nāradaḥ ṛṣi  
lokād anvīṣya bhūyaścā caritaṃ caritavrataḥ...

[The sage had at first heard from Nārada the seed of the poem.  
Then vowing to get the full story he went again and again to enquire from the people about it.]

The fiction of a Valmiki isolated from the rich oral tradition is kept. But Narada's outline is recognized for what it is: a *kāvyaabijam*, the gist of a poem. Yet more interesting and more important than the *kāvya* is the *carita*, i.e. the story as it is preserved in the popular tradition. The most elaborate *anukramaṇī* given as an appendix in the Baroda edition (*Bālakāṇḍa*, p. 401 ff.) represents a stage of compilation in which most of the popular traditions have been investigated and recorded. The result is, no doubt, less neat and more cumbrous than Narada's well-pruned synopsis, but it

is much more valuable as regards the 'original' story of Rama. For the real problem is not to find out the *text* of the first artificial *kāvya* written on the theme of Rama but, with the help of the various recensions, to go back to the popular oral tradition previous to any tampering by the sophisticated *literati*. The complete text of the Vulgate, including all the supposed interpolations, constitutes the rich harvest gathered by those compilers who consulted the various local traditions and preserved in writing the fruit of their patient labour. (The *Balakāṇḍa* and the *Uttarakāṇḍa* which Narada though fit to ignore are of special interest, inasmuch as they stand as witnesses of the ancient oral tradition. In the *Balakāṇḍa* we shall see how a great number of epic songs were collected under the theme of the initiation of the young hero. In the *Uttarakāṇḍa*, the ancient tradition concerning Ravana will reveal to us the true mythic dimension of the Epic.<sup>9</sup>

### *The Miraculous Birth of Rāma*

As a prelude to the theme of initiation, the story of the miraculous birth of the four sons of Dasaratha gives the tone to the whole epic. We enter from the start into a world where human realities reflect the mysterious presence and action of divine agencies. Hearing that Dasaratha intends to offer the horse-sacrifice in order to obtain a son, Sumantra approaches him secretly and tells him of an ancient prophecy which the priests have revealed to him:

[ Dasaratha will obtain four valiant sons who will strengthen his dynasty and gain fame in all the worlds — thus the blessed lord Sanat Kumāra prophesied long ago, in the age of the gods ]

Thus Dasaratha's childlessness and Rasyasrnga's role as a priestly agent of fertility are part of a divine plan. Invisibly woven into the pattern of human experience and motivation, and without impairing the genuine validity of either, the divine intention conceived in the timeless *devayuga* finds its fulfilment in the world of men, making a simple and beautiful human quest the unconscious instrument of a divine purpose.



According to Sanatkumara's prophecy a terrible drought will afflict the Anga kingdom. King Romapada will consult the wise brahmins of his court who will advise him as follows

Vaksyanti te mahīpālam brāhmaṇā devapāragāḥ  
Vibhāṇḍakasutam rājan sarvopayair ihānaya  
Anāyaya ca mahīpālā R̥ṣyaśr̥ṅgam susatkr̥tam  
prayaccha kanyāṃ Sāntāṃ vai vidhina susamāhitaḥ.

I. 8, 15-16

[The brahmins well-versed in divine lore will tell the king: O King, you must by all means bring here the son of Vibhāṇḍaka. Once you have duly welcomed R̥ṣy śr̥ṅga, offer him your daughter Sāntā in lawful marriage.]

As soon as R̥ṣyaśr̥ṅga is brought to the capital, he marries Santa and obtains abundant rains. Let Dasaratha befriend Romapada and beg him to send to Ayodhya the young hermit who has gained the power to bestow fertility.

Here, there is an interruption in the narrative which gives us a glimpse into the actual process of the compilation of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The story of Romapada and R̥ṣyaśr̥ṅga must have formed a separate local epic song in the Anga country. When an Anga audience was listening to the tale of Dasaratha's childlessness and of his request to Romapada, they felt that the part of R̥ṣyaśr̥ṅga was not given its due treatment. They had often heard the full story and they liked it, and they would hear it again. The bard had to comply. The present text has kept an echo of this typical experience of oral poetry. But the compilation being made outside the court atmosphere of the festive hall, the request of the audience has been put in the mouth of Dasaratha

Atha hr̥ṣṭo Daśarathaḥ Sumantram pratyabhāṣata  
yathar̥ṣyaśr̥ṅgastvānto vistareṇa tvayocyatām.

I. 8, 23

[Full of joy Dasaratha told Sumantra: "Tell me in detail how R̥ṣyaśr̥ṅga was brought to the Anga capital.]

Chanto IX, which tells the story at length, is a fine illustration of the fluidity of the oral tradition. The text itself tells us how courtesans are sent from the city to entice the innocent young hermit out of his celibate existence: having never seen a woman before, he receives them with surprise and respect. After giving him a taste of their affection and of the dainties of the city, they leave him alone in a state of uneasy melancholy. He follows them to the city and his arrival brings the long expected rain. He is married to Santa and enjoys his new life.

One can easily imagine how a lively audience reacted to such a tale and how the singer was stimulated to enrich his narrative with impromptu developments. The variant readings recorded in the notes enable us to recapture something of the skill with which the singer was able to respond to his audience's moods. The longer version of the story given in note 309 (p.69) adds some piquant details: in order to facilitate their task, the courtesans disguise themselves as hermits. Once in the presence of their quarry, they give up all dissembling and their amorous plays and songs are elaborately described. The theme of the temptation of saints by alluring damsels being a common one, the singer was at liberty to draw from other stories relevant details likely to appeal to the audience.

In notes 302(p. 68) and 314(p. 74) we have two different versions of a new incident: the return of Vibhandaka to the hermitage and his surprise at seeing his son in a pensive mood. The boy whom we know to be "anabhijnah sa narinan visayanam sukhaya ca", ignorant of what a woman is and a stranger to all sensual pleasures, describes with charming innocence the visitors and their delightful demeanour :

Bhagavan iha me dr̥ṣṭāḥ puruṣāḥ sādhu locanāḥ  
sukumārair urasijaiḥ pīnair atyadbhūtopamaiḥ  
paripaśpṛṣire māṃ ca gādham ālingya sarvaśaḥ  
gāyanti sukumārīṇi mahojñāni muhurmuḥuḥ  
kṛṣṇānti cādbhūtākārair nayanabhrūviceṣṭitaiḥ.

I, 9, note 314, 8-12

[ O blessed one, I have seen here men with such perfect eyes;  
they had soft swollen breasts, as I have never seen before.  
They held me close in their deep embrace.  
They sang songs of entrancing sweetness,  
and it's marvellous what they can do wit their eyebrows. ]

Finally, in note 315(p.74), a last incident concludes the story. After Rasyasrnga has left the hermitage for the city, his father, tired and longing to see his son, finds the place empty. Greatly disturbed he enquires from the villagers about the young man. Then in meditation, he realizes that destiny has claimed his son for purposes unknown to him. He accepts the mysterious design and regains his peace of mind.

All the preparations for the sacrifice are completed. The sacrificial horse returns after a year's journey, and the ceremony begins. Dasaratha's wish is about to be fulfilled. As Rasyasrnga starts the last part of the ritual, the gods who have assembled around the sacrifice seize the opportunity to make their request to Brahma. They first tell him that it is the boon granted by him which makes Ravana so arrogant and the gods so helpless :

Tvayā tasmai varo dattaḥ prītena bhagavan purā  
mānayantaśca taṁ nityaṁ sarvaṁ tasya kṣamāmahe.

I. 14, 7

[ Long ago you were pleased to grant him a boon: out of respect for your word, we have to suffer all kinds of indignities at his hand. ]

There is only one way out to find the man who will be able to kill him :

Nākirīyad avajñānāt tad rakṣo mānuṣāmstadā  
tasmāt sa mānuṣād vadhyo mṛtyur nānyo'sya vidyate.

I. 14, 14

[ Out of contempt the demon did not mention men: hence it is a man who must kill him ; that's the only means of his death. ]

Just at that moment Viṣṇu appears and the gods immediately perceive the ideal solution to their problem :

Tam abruvan surāḥ sarve samabhiṣṭūya sannataḥ  
tvām niyoksyāmahe Viṣṇo lokānām hitakāmyayā.  
Rājō Daśarathasya tvam Ayodhyādhipater vibho  
dharmajñasya vadānyasya maharsisamatejaśaḥ  
tasya bhāryāsu tiṣṭṣu hrīṣīkīrtiyupamāsu ca  
Viṣṇo putratvam āgaccha kṛtvātmānaṁ caturvidham.  
Tatra tvam mānuṣo bhūtvā pravṛddham lokakāṇṭakam  
avadhyam daivatair Viṣṇo samare jahi Rāvaṇam.

I. 14, 17-19

[ Paying homage to him the gods told him : "O Viṣṇu, we appoint you to be the saviour of the world. The king of Ayodhyā, Daśaratha, is virtuous, generous and wise. His three wives are the embodiment of modesty, beauty and fame: divide yourself into four and become their sons. Thus having become man, you will be able to kill Rāvaṇa in battle, that universal plague which the gods are unable to destroy. ]

Thus the prophecy of Sanat Kumāra is fulfilled: Daśaratha becomes the father of four sons. But his paternity which comes as the fulfilment of his most cherished wish embodies at the same time a divine purpose which transcends all purely human perspectives. The human and temporal reality is like a mirror in which the myth in its timelessness is reflected for a short period of time.

### THREE

#### *The Initiation of Ram*

The theme of the initiation of the young hero is the common patrimony of many different traditions. It marks the passage from adolescence to adulthood. "Generally speaking, initiation means a set of rites and oral teaching whose purpose is the radical modification of the religious and social

status of the subject to be initiated. Philosophically speaking, the initiation brings about an ontological mutation of the existential situation. At the end of the initiatory tests, the neophyte's existence is transformed. ...The initiation introduces the young man both in the human community and in the world of spiritual values. It teaches him not only the customs, techniques and institutions of adult life, but also the myths and sacred traditions of the tribe, the names of the gods and the story of their deeds. Above all it reveals to him the mystical relations between the tribe and the supernatural beings, as they were established in the origin of time."<sup>10</sup>

The theme of initiation as preserved in the *Bālakāṇḍa* contains a number of traditional features which can be classified under the following heads:

- 1 the apprehension of danger and the objection raised by the family ;
- 2 divine weapons and magic formulae given to the young hero ;
- 3 the test of valour in the encounter with monsters ;
- 4 instruction in traditional lore ;
- 5 marriage ;
- 6 emergence of the hero as a new man capable of assuming his mission.

The theme is introduced by the arrival of Visamitra who requests the services of Rama for the destruction of two powerful demons who obstruct his sacrifice. The whole initiation is spread over approximately a lunar month. This device offers a very convenient framework in which a great number of traditional tales can be fitted in as the journey proceeds, the young hero can satisfy his curiosity by asking his spiritual guide to enlighten him on various subjects which the visited sites suggest to him. The end and the beginning of each day are clearly indicated by a set of formulae which, in spite of their variety, reveal the technique of oral poetry.<sup>11</sup>

Although a chronological study of Rama's initiation as it progresses day after day be quite possible, I think it is preferable to analyse it systematically according to the six headings given above.

1. *Apprehension of danger and objection by the family* (I. 17-20)

Names have been given to the four boys and they grow both in age and wisdom. Dasaratha is a happy man and begins to think about the future of his sons and about their marriage. Visvamitra appears and is royally welcomed. In an outburst of joy the king expresses his readiness to satisfy any request which the sage may deem fit to make:

Kaṃ ca te paramaṃ kṛ̃maṃ karomi kimu haṣṭitaḥ.

I. 17, 34ab

[ What is your dearest wish : it will be a joy for me to fulfil it. ]

This is not the first time Dasaratha gives his word unconditionally to feel sorry later on when asked to keep it. As in the case of Kaikeyi, so also here it is Rama who is the object of the request. Two powerful demons, Marica and Subahu, are defiling the altar of Visvamitra's sacrifice. Rama alone, so says the sage, is able to destroy them. Dasaratha is thunderstruck. He pleads passionately : a mere boy, fifteen years old, without experience, especially against demons. He, the king, will go himself with his armies to light the *rikṣasas*. But he will never allow Rama to be exposed to such danger. And if Rama must go, let him take the army with him. His final prayer is pathetic :

Prāṇaiḥ priyatarāṃ putrāṃ na me tvāṃ netuṃ arhasi  
praṇipatya ca yacē tvāṃ kṛpāṇāṃ putralālasaḥ.

I. 19, note 575, 5-6

[ Do not take away my son who is dearer to me than life, I fall at your feet and beg you, a wretched man madly fond of his son. ]

Visvamitra does not help matters by adding that Marica and Subahu are instigated by Ravana himself. The king would not dare challenge the lord of demons. How could he then send his son to certain death? His refusal is peremptory: "Naiva dasyami putrakam"—"I will not give my little son."

The anger of Visvamitra makes the earth and the heavens tremble : "You have promised," he tells the king, "and now you go back on your word." Vasistha realizes that this breach of promise is the greatest disgrace for the Ikṣvaku dynasty

Saṃśrutyai vaṃ kariṣyāmi tyakurvāṇasya Rāghava  
iṣṭāpūrtavadhō bhūyāt tasmād Rāmaṃ visarjaya.

I. 20, 8

[ You have promised 'I will do it'; , if you refuse, all your good deeds are erased. Hence, let Rāma go. ]

Moreover, there is no reason to fear, for Visvamitra has enormous power which he can confer upon the young here :

Evamviryō mahātēja Viśvāmitro mahātapaḥ  
na Rāmāgamane rājan saṃśayaṃ gantum arhasi.

I. 20, 19

[ The great ascetic Viśvāmitra possesses such valour and power that you should have no misgiving at all in letting Rāma go with him. ]

This pacifies Dasaratha. He gracefully consents. Under a shower of flowers and to the accompaniment of celestial music :

Viśvāmitro yayāvagre tato Rāmo mahāyāśāḥ  
kākapakṣadharo dhanvī taṁ ca Saumitrir anvagāt.

I. 21, 6

[ Viśvāmitra took the lead ; glorious Rāma came after him ; the son of Sumitr  
flowing locks followed, bow in hand. ]

Thus the two adolescents begin their journey towards adulthood : under the guidance of their master, they must, according to the rules of initiation, gain, unaided by their family, the right to enter into the community as full members. The time has come for them to show their mettle and to become familiar with the social and mythical traditions which found the glory of their dynasty.

## 2. *Divine weapons and magic formulae*

Shortly after their departure from Ayodhya, they reach the southern bank of the Sarayu river. Purified in its waters, Rama receives from Visvamitra the two sacred formulae 'Balā' and 'Atibalā' which will make him immune against fatigue, fever, hunger and thirst and protect him against the sudden attacks of enemies. Knowledge, wisdom and fame will enrich his life with a new lustre. Right from the start, the young hero is equipped for future tasks.

On the third day the gods, delighted by the death of Tataka, authorize Visvamitra to confer on Rama the divine weapons which are under his control. The next day, the royal sage calls the multitude of irresistible arms which Rama will be able to summon by a mere mental order.

## 3. *Test of the young hero's valour*

The first test occurs before the gift of the divine weapons. It is a test both of strength and of obedience. When, on the third day, Tataka appears, Rama is surprised that the daughter of a *yakṣa* should be so powerful. Visvamitra explains : her father Suketu had asked for a son, but Brahma instead gave him a daughter of astounding strength. She married Sunda and they had a son, Marica. With the help of her son, she killed her husband and decided to harass the sage Agastya. The latter cursed them both and condemned them to be changed into *rākṣasas*. Since then, they have devastated the countryside with complete impunity. Rama hesitates : is it right to kill a woman ? But Visvamitra is emphatic :

Na hi te śrīrvadhakṛte ghrṇā kāryā narottama  
cāturvarṇyahitārthāya kartavyam rājasūnuna.

I. 24, 15

[ Have no scruple about killing a woman : a king's son has the duty to maintain four classes. ]

Rama has been ordered by his father to obey Visvamitra : there is no choice though he still hesitates and tells Laksmama :

Vinivṛttām karomyadya hṛtakarṇāgranāsikām  
na hyenām utsahe hantum strīsvābhāvena rakṣitām.

I. 25, 11cd, 12ab

[ I will only put her out of action by cutting her ears and nose ; I dare not kill her ; her womanhood protects her. ]

But when she attacks with a will to kill, he pierces her breast with an arrow, and she falls dead on the ground.

It is this first act of valour which is rewarded by the gift of the divine weapons. Henceforth, Rama is no longer an adolescent. He has taken his place in the world as the unconquerable defender of right and truth.

In Visvamitra's hermitage, the two princes spend six days and six nights without sleep, keeping a vigilant guard over the holy man who is absorbed in silent meditation. One is reminded of the holy vigil of the medieval candidates to knighthood. On the day of the sacrifice, Marica and Subahu swoop down towards the altar. Rama summoning the divine weapons kills them to the delight of all the hermit-dwellers.

#### 4. *Instruction in traditional lore*

This part of the initiation is the longest. The insatiable thirst for knowledge which prompts Rama to ask questions is matched by the inexhaustible store of information which Visvamitra has gathered. The question-answer method gives to the compiler an almost indefinite scope for collecting legends of all kinds which, in his mind, are worth preserving. Rama's curiosity provides some kind of a loose unity to the series of tales, many of which must have had their independent existence before scribes undertook to put them down in writing as parts of Rama's initiation. One feature, however, deserves our attention : Visvamitra is an expert in etymology. This concern to restore to the names of places, rivers and men or gods their internal significance belongs essentially to a pre-literate age when the *Word* was no mere *flatus vocis* but a living reality pregnant with hidden and mysterious implications. That mythico-magical atmosphere which the teaching of Visvamitra succeeds in re-creating takes us back to a remote antiquity in which the universe was not an independent entity but the focal point of supernatural forces which the human could evoke and control by the mere utterance of words and names.

As it is not possible to give a complete account here of Visvamitra's instruction, we should be satisfied with a few illustrations.

On the second day, the master and his two disciples reach the confluence of the Sarayu and the Ganga. Seeing a hermitage, the two princes ask :

Kasyāyamaśramah puṇyaḥ ko nvasmin vasate puṁān  
Bhagavan śrotum icchāvaḥ paraṁ kautūhalaṁ hi nau.

I. 22, 8

[ Whose is this holy her  
to know. ]

it ? Blessed one, we are most anxious

This, says Visvamitra, is *Kāmāśrama*. Kama, the god of love, had disturbed Siva in his meditation. With a flash of his third eye the god reduced him to ashes. Hence his name *Anaṅga*, the "Bodiless". And the place where he abandoned his body (*aṅga*) is now the Anga country. Now, Kama's disciples live here a holy and sinless life.

On the third day, while they are crossing the Ganga by boat, Rama's curiosity is again aroused :

Atha Rāma sarin-madhye papraccha munipuṅgavam  
variṇo bhidyamānasya kim ayaṁ tumulo dhvaniḥ.

I. 23, 5

"What is that roaring noise

isvamitra explains there is on the Kailasa mountain a lake which was '*manasā nirmītam*' by Brahma: hence, its name '*Mānasā sarah*'. From that lake (*sarah*) flows the river which encircles Ayodhya : hence, its name '*Sarayū*'. The noise is created by the meeting of the Sarayu and the Ganga.

On reaching the southern bank of the Ganga, Rama sees a thick forest infested by wild and terrible beasts. The question is spontaneous: "Ki nividam darunam vanam" (I.23,14) —"What is this horrible forest?" Visvamitra explains: Long ago Indra defeated the demon Vrtra, but the fight had covered his body with dirt. Famished and further defiled by the murder of a brahmin, he arrived here and the hermits gave him a bath. The dirt (*mala*) and the defilement (*kārūṣa*) fell from his body and the people of the place buried them in the ground. Happy to feel clean and pure again, Indra blessed them:

Imau janapadau sphṛṭtau khyātiṁ loke gamiṣyataḥ  
Maladāśca Karūṣāśca mamāṅgamaladhāriṇau.

I. 23, 26

[ These two prosperous people will become famous in the world : they are the Maladas and the Karūṣas, for they keep the dirt and defilement of my body. ]



In fact, these two people enjoyed a remarkable prosperity until Tataka came to devastate their country.

Among the other legends told by Visvamitra the most important are the following : the birth of Karttikeya, named after the Krttikas (Pleiads) who nursed him ; the long story of Sagara, an Ikshvaku prince, and of his 60,000 sons; the churning of the ocean and the origin of the Suras and Asuras; the penance of Diti and its fateful outcome.

Before reaching Mithila, the princes and their guide stop at the hermitage of Gautama. It is deserted and Rama wants to know why :

Śrīmadāśramasaṃkāśaṃ kiṃ nvidam munivarjitam  
śrotum icchāmi bhagavan kāśyāyaṃ pūrva āśramah.

I. 47, 12

[ Why is this beautiful hermitage empty and deserted? I want to hear from you whose hermitage this was formerly.]

Follows the ancient tale of Indra's sinful union with Gautama's wife, Ahalya, and of the curse which makes Indra impotent and condemns Ahalya to live invisible and without food in the hermitage up to the time when Rama comes and restores her to her human form. This version of the tale is different from that of the *Uttarakāṇḍa* (Gita Press edition, XXX, 20-46): here Ahalya recognizes Indra in spite of his disguise and offers herself to him, whereas in the *Uttarakāṇḍa* she is unaware of her betrayal. Such variations are frequent in the oral transmission of the same tale and they do not affect the main issue.

Rama enters the hermitage and his presence puts an end to Gautama's curse. Thus, as his initiation draws to a close, he grows not only into an invincible warrior, but also into a person whose spiritual power can take away the defilement of sin.

##### 5. Marriage

At Mithila Visvamitra is received with great honour. King Janaka wonders who the two young princes are. Visvamitra introduces them and relates their wonderful deeds. Hearing that Ahalya has been freed of the curse, her son, Satananda who is the priest of Janaka's court, exults with joy and begins his long account of Visvamitra's career for the benefit of the two princes. This account covers fifteen cantos and its insertion at this point appears quite artificial. Yet, in the context of the whole *Rāmāyaṇa* it has an important function to fulfil. We shall analyse it in a special chapter.

The princes want to see the famous bow of Siva which was given as a sacred trust to Janaka's ancestor Devarata. Having been excluded from

Dakṣa's sacrifice Siva, bow in hand, had threatened the gods that he would cut their heads. Pacified by the gods' homage, he had surrendered the bow to them and they, in their turn, had entrusted it to Devarata.

Further Janaka relates how, as he was ploughing his field, his daughter Sita sprung up from underneath the plough.<sup>12</sup> He decided that no prince would obtain her hand without a special display of valour : she would be 'viryaśulka'. He put the numerous suitors to the test by asking them to hold and string Siva's bow. They all failed and, in their anger, attacked Mithila. Reduced to the last extremity, Janaka propitiated the gods who gave him a full army. The suitors were completely annihilated. Now, he is willing to show the bow to the sons of Dasaratha :

Yadyasya dhanuṣo Rāmaḥ kuryad āropanaṃ mune  
sutāṃ ayonijāṃ Sītāṃ dadyāṃ Dāśaratho aham.

I. 65, 27

[ If Rāma can string the bow, O Sage, I will give him in marriage my daughter Sītā who was not born of the womb. ]

The gigantic bow is brought and, without effort, Rama strings it, draws it and breaks it into two. Janaka is glad to have found a worthy husband for his daughter and sends messengers to Ayodhya to inform and invite Dasaratha. After three days' journey, the message is duly conveyed and, on the next day, the royal party leaves for Mithila. They take four days to reach and are welcomed with respect and affection. On the next day the ceremonies begin. Janaka's brother, King Kusadhvaṇa is invited and Vasistha recites the genealogy of the Ikṣvaku kings. It is a long list of almost forty ancestors out of whom Kalidasa chose four, in his *Raghuvamśa*, as examples of regal virtue. In his turn, Janaka gives the history of his dynasty. He also gives his second daughter Urmilā to Lakṣmaṇa. On the request of Viśvāmitra the two daughters of Kusadhvaṇa, Mandavī and Śrutakīrti, are given as wives to Bharata and Śatrughṇa. On the auspicious day the marriage of the four princes with the four princesses is performed in an atmosphere of deep solemnity and grateful joy.

Rama, avatara of Viṣṇu, born without man's intervention and Sita, 'ayonijā', born without cohabitation, are united. It is the marriage of heaven and earth, of Curanos and Gaia, the primeval union which will be attacked and assailed by the destructive powers of violence and greed. When the gigantic cosmic struggle will culminate in the defeat and transfiguration of the forces of evil, Sita will return to the earth and Rama to heaven, their union in the fleeting passage of time having, as it were, incarnated in human history the timeless mythical pattern of divine antagonism and reconciliation.

Visvamitra, the master of initiation has completed his task : he bids farewell to the royal families and retires to the Himalaya. Janaka offers immense treasures to the brides and Dasaratha starts on his return journey with his sons and their brides. On the way, amidst signs of apocalyptic terror, Parasurama, the son of Jamadagni and the sworn enemy of the Ksatriyas, appears and challenges Rama. Dasaratha who still considers his son as an adolescent, begs the formidable brahmin to relent. His request is brushed aside and the confrontation takes place between the two Ramas. The brahmin has in his hands the bow of Visnu. He has heard about Rama's prowess and has come to test the young hero. The bow which Rama broke in Mithila was the bow of Siva. Will he be able to bend and string the bow of Visnu? The gods, one day, were anxious to know which, between Siva and Visnu, was the stranger. To satisfy their curiosity, Brahma instigated a quarrel between the two. Both had a bow made by Visvakarma. In the terrific encounter which followed, Visnu, by the power of his war-cry, made Siva's bow recoil. That was the end of the conflict :

Jñmbhitam tad dhanur dr̥ṣṭvā śaivam viṣṇuparākramai,  
adhikaṃ menire Viṣṇuṃ devāḥ sarśiṅgaṇāstadā.

I. 74, 19

[ Seeing the bow of Siva recoil under the power of Viṣṇu the gods and the sages judged Viṣṇu to be stronger. ]

The antagonism between Visnu and Siva is a very ancient mythical theme. Parasurama knowing that Rama has broken the bow of Siva, wonders from where he has received his strength. By offering him the bow of Visnu and defying him to bend and string it, he puts Rama to the supreme test. As soon as the bow is in the hands of Rama, it behaves like a docile instrument in the hands of its master. Powerless and emptied of all vigour, the son of Jamadagni recognizes in Rama the very embodiment of Visnu :

Akṣayyam madhuhantāram jānāmi tvām Sureśvaram  
dhanuḥśīṣya parāmarśāt savasti te'stu paramtapa.  
Na ceyam mama Kākutstha vr̥ṣṭā bhavitum arhati  
tvayā trilokyanāthena yad ahaṃ vimukhikṛtāḥ.

I. 75, 17 & 19

[ From the way you have bent that bow, I know that you are the imperishable Lord of the gods, the killer of Madhu. Glory to you, Conqueror !  
either should I consider it as a humiliation to have been defeated by you, O Lord of the three worlds. ]

uma then discharges the arrow and destroys all the worlds which Parasurama had gained by his penance. He spares his power to move at will, so

that he may keep his promise not to occupy the earth which he had bestowed on Kasyapa.

The initiation is over and we know that Rama's destiny cannot be that of a simple mortal. Revealed in his superhuman stature, he belongs to a world where human joys and sorrows, hopes and ambitions lose their sense of importance and urgency. We feel that the great rejoicing of the return to Ayodhya (I, 76) has something hollow about it and will soon be shattered, because it is incompatible with the mysterious design for which Rama was born in the world of mortals and for the fulfilment of which his initiation has prepared him.

Among the various legends which have been woven into the theme of Rama's initiation, the longest and the most significant is that of Visvamitra's career. It is Satanda, son of Gautama and Ahalya and priest at the court of Janaka, who relates it to Rama and Lakshmana, while Janaka himself listens with rapt attention. The amazing struggle for power crowned by Visvamitra's final success stands in perfect contrast with the insatiable ambition of Ravana as described in the *Uttarakāṇḍa*. The two accounts form a diptych illustrating the power of *tapas*. *Tapas*, the heat of penance, enables man and demon so to transcend their mortality as to become a threat to the gods' jealous privilege of immortality. It is Indra who is the defender of the gods' prerogative and it is Brahma who sanctions by his boons the mysterious power of *tapas*.

The royal sage and the Lord of Lanka have many traits in common. They both take their origin in Prajapati.<sup>13</sup> Temperamentally they are very similar to each other: both are consumed by greed, blind in their uncontrolled anger, unable to resist their lustful desires. Both seek the help of Mahadeva and have the ambition to overcome Indra. In their elemental violence, they remind us of the Titans. But, and this is where the difference between them appears, Visvamitra's affinity with Prometheus endows him with a quality which Ravana totally lacks.

Both narratives are built on a similar pattern. In his ambition to conquer the gods, Ravana attacks in turn Kuvera, Yama, Varuna and Indra, the four Lokapalas.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, Visvamitra in his conquest of *brahmatva*

practises penance in the four directions. This is how, in parallel with Ravana's career, the career of Visvāmītra unfolds itself :

#### I. Visvāmītra's genealogy and his royal power

- 1 His visit to Vasiṣṭha's hermitage.
- 2 His greed : he wants to possess Śabalā.
- 3 His wrath and violence brought to nought by Vasiṣṭha.
- 4 He seeks the help of Mahādeva : the divine weapons.
- 5 His utter defeat and his resolve to conquer *brahmatva*.

#### II. Visvāmītra's conquest of brahmatva

- 1 *Penance in the South* : he is recognized as *Rajarsi*.  
—The episode of Trisanku and Viśvāmītra's confrontation with Indra.
- 2 *Penance in the West*.  
—The episode of Sunahśepa  
—Brahmā gives him the title of *Rsi*.  
—The allurement of love : Menakā.
- 3 *Penance in the North*  
—Brahmā refuses him the title of *Brahmarshi*.  
—Indra sends Rambhā.  
—Viśvāmītra overcomes lust but yields to anger.
- 4 *Penance in the East*  
—The gods are afraid.  
—The last attempt of Indra.  
—Viśvāmītra becomes *Brahmarshi*.  
—Reconciliation with Vasiṣṭha.

#### I. Visvāmītra and Vasiṣṭha

The powerful king has travelled wide and far and arrives one day at Vasiṣṭha's hermitage. Immediately they feel attracted towards each other :

Kṛtvābhau suciraṃ kālāṃ dharmiṣṭhau tāḥ kathāḥ śubhāḥ  
mudā paramayā yuktāu prīyetaṃ tau parasparaṃ.

I. 51, 11

[ For a long time they exchanged auspicious greetings ; sharing a common joy, they felt deep affection for each other. ]

Things begin to take a bad turn after Vasiṣṭha has, through the power of his wish-yielding cow, Śabalā, offered a sumptuous meal to the king's army. Visvāmītra is amazed and immediately offers to buy the cow : his greed is aroused and he is willing to pay the most fantastic price. But the hermit is not interested : he values his cow as over all possible treasure :

Itad eva hi me ratnam itad eva hi me dhanam  
etat eva hi sarvaṃyam itad eva hi jīvitam.

I. 52, 22

The king insists, but the sage puts an end to his eager appeals :

Bahunā kim pralāpena na dāsyo kāmadohinīm.

I. 52, 24cd

[ No use to insist ; I will not give my cow. ]

Frustrated greed expresses itself in anger and violence : Visvamitra steals the cow. She escapes and returns to her master whom she finds in a state of deep despondency. She tells him to take heart and creates armies of foreign tribes which defeat the arrogant king. The hundred sons of the vanquished sovereign attack the hermitage: Vasistha reduces them to ashes, except one to whom Visvamitra leaves his kingdom. He himself goes to the Himalaya to ask the help of Mahadeva. The god readily complies and puts at the disposal of his client the magic science of archery and all the divine weapons available. Self-confident and more arrogant than ever, Visvamitra spreads terror and panic in Vasistha's hermitage. But the sage resists the onslaught and, with his *brahmadanda*, neutralizes the power of all the divine weapons, including that of the *brahmāstra*. This defeat marks Visvamitra's first step towards enlightenment

Dhig balaṃ ksatriyabalaṃ brahmatejobalaṃ balaṃ  
ekena brahmadandena sarvāstrāṇi hatāni me ;  
tad etat samavekṣyāhaṃ prasannendriyamānaḥ  
tapo mahat samāsthā<sub>3</sub>ye yad vai brahmatvakāraṇam.

I. 55, 23-24

[ Fie on the ksatriya power ; brahma-power is the real power : since all my weapons have been made useless by the sole *brahmadanda*. After this I shall practise severe penance keeping my senses and my mind under control in order to gain brahmahood. ]

It was a hard lesson to learn : it took a first defeat, the death of his hundred sons and his final discomfiture to bring about Visvamitra's conversion. As to the role played by Siva, it is significant in this that he does not hesitate to supply weapons to greed and violence. But these very weapons obtained through the favour of Mahadeva for the destruction of Vasistha's hermitage will be given by Visvamitra to Rama to fulfil the design of Visnu.

## II. Visvamit 's conquest of brahmatva

### *Penance in the South*

Once he has made up his mind to seek higher spiritual achievements, Visvamitra moves to the South. His queen accompanies him and they obtain four sons. After one thousand years' penance, Brahma confers on him the title of Rajarsi. A pultry reward, indeed, for so great an effort :

Tapaśca sumahat taptam rājarṣir iti mām viduḥ  
devāḥ sarṣigaṇāḥ sarve nāsti manye tapaḥphalam.

I. 56, 8

[ After such a great penance gods and sages deign to call me 'rājarṣi' ! I feel I have been cheated. ]

But he does not give up. As he begins a new round of austerities, there comes to him the pious Ikṣvaku king, Trisanku. His cherished dream is to enter the realm of the gods without losing his body. He begs Vasistha to help him. Dismissed by him, he approaches his hundred sons who also were practising penance. They laugh at him, call him childish and rebuke him for ignoring their father's decision

Tad atikramya vacanam kasmād asmān upāgataḥ  
mūlam utsrīya kasmāt tvaṃ śākhām iochasi lambitum.

I. 57, note 1107

[ After rejecting our father's advice, how dare you come to us? You cannot uproot a tree and then seek the support of its branches. ]

Infuriated, Trisanku insulted them and they cursed him and changed him into a *caṇḍāla*. Ugly, dirty, disfigured he reaches now the place where Visvamitra is smarting under the shabby treatment dealt out to him by the gods. Their meeting is that of two fellow-sufferers and brings to mind the encounter of Prometheus and Io. But while Prometheus had no other consolation to give to Io than the long recital of her torments to come and the prediction that her trial would come to an end, Visvamitra, goaded by Trisanku, decides to act. This is how the fallen king arouses the Prometheus spirit of Visvamitra :

Daivam eva param manye pauraṣaṃ tu nirarthakam  
daivenākramyate sarvaṃ daivaṃ hi paramā gatiḥ.  
Tasya me paramārtasya prasādam abhikaṅksataḥ  
kartum arhasi bhadraṃ te daivopahatakarmanāḥ.  
Nānyām gatiṃ gamiṣyāmi nānyaḥ śaraṇam asti me  
daivam puruṣakāreṇa nivartayitum arhasi.

I. 57, 21-23

[ Divine power, I think, is supreme ; man's power is of no avail. Divine power rules everything, without challenge. I am most miserable and beg your help. Do favour me, Blessed One, see how divine power has thwarted me. I have nowhere else to go; you are my sole refuge: it belongs to you to counteract divine power by your human might. ]

The challenge is tempting and Visvamitra does not hesitate to take it up. He sends his sons and his disciples to summon all the sages around for the performance of the sacrifice which will send Trisanku to heaven. All the hermits hasten to answer the invitation except Mahodaya and the hundred sons of Vasistha who find it preposterous for brahmins to associate themselves

with a sacrifice whose sacrificer is a *caṇḍāla* and whose priest is a *kṣatriya*. Visvamitra by a curse condemns them to become despised outcasts : a fit revenge for the loss of his sons. The sacrifice is duly performed and Visvamitra, the main priest, invites the gods to come down and share in it. Enraged by their refusal, he brandishes the sacrificial ladle and, on the strength gained by his penance, he orders Trisanku to rise to heaven with his body. But Indra, seeing a mortal ascending bodily to the gods' abode, orders him to fall down. In a paroxysm of fury, Visvamitra creates in the southern direction a new firmament with its own constellations. The gods protest. Visvamitra replies :

Saśarīrasya bhadraṃ vastrīṣaṅkorasya bhūpateḥ  
aroṇaṇaṃ pratijñāya nāṇṭaṃ kartum utsahe.

I. 59, 26

[ Blessed ones, I have promised king Trisāṅku to send him up bodily on my word. ]

This argument is final: the gods agree to keep in existence the new firmament created by the irate sage and to give Trisanku a permanent place in it as a new constellation.

The Greek Prometheus is a suffering Titan whose endurance is sustained by the secret knowledge whose revelation alone can save Zeus from destruction. The Indian Prometheus is a frustrated mortal whose magic power combined with a devastating temper is able to challenge and frighten the gods into compliance. But however gratifying his victory over Indra, he has still a long way to go before realizing his ambition.

#### *Penance in the West*

The South had been the witness of the resistance offered by the gods. Visvamitra decides to move to Puskara in the West where he hopes to find a more congenial atmosphere. At that time, another king of Ayodhya, Ambarisa, was offering a sacrifice. But the ever vigilant Indra had come down and stolen the animal before it was immolated. On the advice of his priest, the king sets out in order either to find the animal or to replace it by a human victim. After long and fruitless peregrinations, he reaches the hermitage of Ricika, a poor brahmin living with his wife and his three sons. He offers to buy one of his sons for a very substantial price

Bahuputro daridraśca vṛddhaścāpi tapodhana  
yaḥ śi te rocate brahman sutaṃ ekam parityaja  
puskararthe kṛtārthaḥ syām ahaṃ Kāśyapa suvrata.

I. , note 1145, 3-5

[ O holy man, you have many sons, you are poor and old; if you agree to give up one of your sons, he will serve as victim and my purpose will be fulfilled. ]



Rcika is reluctant to part with his eldest son ; his wife wants to keep the youngest. It remains for Sunahsepa, the middle one, to volunteer for the unenviable assignment :

Pitā jyeṣṭham avikreyaṃ mātā cāha kanyasam  
vikrītāṃ madhyamaṃ manye rājan putraṃ nayasva mām

I. 60, 20

[ My father says : The eldest cannot be sold, my mother, the youngest. This, I think, gives no choice to the middle one. Take me with you, O king. ]

On his way back to Ayodhya, Ambarisa and his human prey stop at Puskara. Tired, thirsty and dejected, the boy takes refuge in the lap of Visvamitra and tells him his tale of woe :

Na me'sti mātā na pitā jnātayo bāndhavaḥ kutaḥ  
trātum arhasi mām saumya dharmeṇa munipuṅgava.

I. 61, 4

[ I have no mother, no father, no relations, no friends : It is your duty, O best of holy men, to save me. ]

like Prometheus, Visvamitra is moved by human suffering. He takes pity on the helpless boy. At the same time, he does not want to spoil the king's sacrilice. In order to combine the boy's rescue from death and the success of the king's sacrifice, he goes to the four sons who were born to him at the beginning of his ascetical life and asks one of them to offer himself as victim.

Nāthavāmśca Śunahśepo yajnaścāvighnato bhavet  
devatāstarpitāśca syur mama cāpi kṛtāṃ vacaḥ.

I. 61, 11

[ Śunahśepa will be saved, the sacrifice will be successful, the gods will will have kept my word. ]

This proposal provokes the arrogant refusal of the four sons whom Visvamitra curses: they will be changed into low-class people eating dogmeat. He then teaches Sunahsepa two hymns to be sung at the moment of immolation. Singing the praise of Indra and Visnu, the boy is freed and the sacrilice duly performed.

Visvamitra resumes his penance and, after one thousand years, Brahma gives him the title of Rsi. That is one step forward, but it leaves him dissatisfied. His new austerities cause anxiety to the gods: it is like a bargain in which the seller tries to pacify, at a minimum cost, the avidity of the bidder. Indra decides to use his classical device and sends the apsaras onuka to bathe in the Puskara lake. Visvamitra sees her:

Dṛṣṭvā kundaṛpavaśāgo munistām idam abravīt  
Apsurāḥ svāgataṃ te'stu vasa ccha mamāśrame.

I. 62, 6

[ On seeing her he fell in love and said : Welcome to you ; do dwell in my hermitage ]

Goodbye to penance ! For ten years, they both live together in the delights of love. After that short spell of infatuation, the sage realizes that the gods have cheated him. He kindly dismisses Menaka and, leaving the place of his failure, he goes to the North and settles on the bank of the Kausiki river.

*Penance in the North*

The rigour of his asceticism increases the apprehension of the gods. After consultation, they agree to give him the title of Maharsi. Brahma congratulates him and advises him to relent and to enjoy the new honour conferred on him. Humbly Visvamitra begs for a last favour : the title of Brahmarshi. But he is not qualified yet :

Tam uvāca taṁ Brahmā na tāvat tvam jitendriyaḥ  
yatasva munīśārdūla ityuktṛvā tridivam gataḥ.

I. 62, 21

[ Then Brahma told him : "You have not yet controlled your passions. Try again."  
And he returned to heaven. ]

Standing without support, with one arm raised, with no other food than the air, spending his summers in the midst of four fires and under the scorching sun, shelterless during the rains, standing in the icy lakes during the winter, Visvamitra, in his supreme effort to conquer the coveted *brahmatva*, arouses the alarm of the gods and Indra, once more, tries to frustrate the sage's endeavour by sensual allurements. This time, he chooses Rambha, a beautiful nymph, and he allays her fears by promising her that he will himself, disguised as a *kokila*, help her in her delicate mission. Poor Rambha ! She did not know what was in store for her

Kokilasya tu śuśrāva valgu vyāharataḥ svanam  
samprahṛṣṭena manasā tata eṇām udaikṣata.  
Atha tasya ca sabdena glitenāpratimena ca  
darśanena ca Rambhāy āmuniḥ sandeham āgataḥ.

I. 63, 8-9

[ Viśvamitra heard the *kokila's* sweet twitter ;  
turning round he saw her and was thrilled.  
But the song was so enchanting and the vision  
so alluring that his suspicion was roused. ]

Like one escaping in the nick of time from the ambush of a wily enemy, he shukes off the temptation and, in an outburst of rage, curses the celestial maiden, changing her into stone. Seeing her in that state, he realizes that, while conquering lust, he has succumbed to anger :

Kopena sa mahātejāstapo' paharaṇe kṛte  
indriyair ajitai Rāma na lebhe sāntim ātmanaḥ.

I. 63, 15

[ Anger had robbed him of the fruit of penance ; his unsubdued passion shattered his inner peace. ]

Leaving the place which had witnessed his defeat, he goes to the East.

*Penance in the East*

His purpose is to kill anger in his fiery heart. He stops breathing and undertakes a rigorous fast for one thousand years. At the end of his fast, as he is preparing to eat, Indra, disguised as a brahmin, approaches and begs him for food. He eats up everything, hoping that the famished sage will lose his temper.

niḥśeṣite' nne bhagavān abhuktvaiṣa mahātapāḥ  
na kiñcid avadaḍ vipraṃ maunavratam upāsthitaḥ  
tathaivāsit puar mau am anucchvāsam cakāra ca.

I. 64, note 1185, 6-8

[ No food was left : the great ascetic, famished as he was,  
did not say a word to the brahmin. Keeping to his vow  
of silence, he once more checked his breath. ]

His penance, purified of all stain of sin, is like a fire which could cause a universal conflagration. The gods agree that it is better to grant him his wish than to allow his power to go out of control.

Buddhiṃ na kuruṣe yāvan nāṣe deva mahāmuni,  
tāvat prasādyo bhagavān agnirūpo mahadyutiḥ.

I. 64, 8

[ Let us not give him a chance to conceive some destructive plan ;  
he shines like fire: we should fulfil his wish without delay. ]

Brahma comes down and greets him :

Brahmaṛṣe svāgatam te'stu tapasāsmi sutoṣitāḥ  
brāhmaṇyaṃ tapasogreṇa prāptavān asi Kauśika.

I. 64, 11

[ Hail to you, O brahmaṛṣi ! I am extremely pleased with your penance. Through  
your severe austerity you have gained the status of brāhmaṇa. ]

As a grand finale to his spiritual odyssey, Visvamitra obtains the friendship of Vasistha who recognizes in him a fellow-brahmana.

All through Indra stands as the champion of the gods against the ambitions of men and demons. His violence, cunning and incontinence bring him in close parallel with Zeus the wielder of the thunderbolt. He is the more jealous of his position since he knows, by personal experience, that it can be compromised. The killing of Vṛtra, the treacherous destruction of Diti's

offspring and the seduction of Ahalya have cost him heavy losses. After being restored to his pristine rank, he keeps an eye on all mortals with a view to thwarting any attempt at overreaching their humble condition. As long as Visvamitra's pride and greed are centred on acquiring the miraculous cow Sabala, he does not interfere. But as soon as the frustrated king turns his mind to the conquest of *brahmatva*, his vigilance is aroused and he goes into action. It is he who opposes the ascent of Trisanku; he who steals the victim of king Ambarisa's sacrifice and indirectly brings Sunahsepa to Visvamitra's hermitage; he who sends Menaka and Rambha to tempt the sage; he how disguises himself as a brahmin and eats the food of the fasting ascetic. Zeus, too, is jealous of his newly conquered power. But Prometheus has nothing of an ascetic. His suffering is not self-imposed but inflicted on him by the new overlord of the gods. His weapon against his tormentor is the secret whose revelation would ward off Zeus' downfall. Eventually, like Indra with Visvamitra, Zeus will have to come to terms with Prometheus, and the harmony will be once more established.

Just as Ravana's career culminates in the capture of Indra by his son Meghanada, so does the final victory of Visvamitra take place in the eastern quarter, which is the quarter of Indra. Yet, it is the quality of their respective victory which opposes the son of Gadhi to the lord of Lanka. The latter remains impervious to any kind of enlightenment. His values never change and he is for ever the slave of greed, lust and anger. He stands as a perfect antithesis to Rama. Visvamitra is a potential Ravana, but defeat and humiliation bring him to his senses. He is made to realize that true power resides in self-control. His real struggle is against himself and we see him conquering one after the other, at the cost of a gigantic renunciation, those very passions which led Ravana to his doom. The diptych Visvamitra-Ravana provides a perfect setting to the heroic image of Rama. Initiated into adulthood by Visvamitra, Rama receives from him those very weapons which Siva had granted as agents of violence and greed: Siva's weapons are handed over to Visnu who will use them to kill Ravana, the living symbol of uncontrolled passion.

#### CONCLUSION

The analysis of Rama's initiation and of Visvamitra's career has enabled us to get a glimpse into the richness of the oral tradition which supplied to the compilers of the *Rāmāyana* the abundant material from which they built up their written text.

In the first instance, the theme of the hero's initiation, with its traditional sub-themes, offered an ideal frame-work for the insertion of a number of songs more or less relevant to the central topic. The very elasticity of the theme is sufficient to explain the differences between the various recensions: local traditions and linguistic peculiarities have left their stamp on the written texts. The fact that the Southern recension contains a much greater number of irregular forms than the Northern recension should not "compel us to accept the Southern recension as representing the older form of the Epic,"<sup>15</sup> for the simple reason that any written text of the *Rāmāyaṇa* represents the latest stage of the epic oral tradition and can have no claim to be "original". To suppose that the Northern version is nothing but a correction of the Southern version is a mere postulate which denies the possibility of simultaneous compilations written in a language bearing the marks of local usage. Equally gratuitous is the assumption that a story written in popular language is older than one written in more refined style. Surely the oral tradition of Northern India possessed a wealth of legends which did not reach the South. When the work of compilation began, these legends were incorporated in the text and written in Sanskrit as it was spoken in the North. Linguistic considerations and judgment on the antiquity of the content are to be carefully kept apart: they have no bearing on each other. Finally Hopkins' critical principle: – "The shorter text is presumably in most cases the older"<sup>16</sup> – shows that its author ignored the vital connection of the written text with oral tradition and saw in the *Rāmāyaṇa* an epic *si ilar* to *Paradise Lost*.

In the second instance, the career of Visvamitra contrasted with that of Ravana brings out with greater clarity one of the mythic patterns which characterize oral tradition. The contrast illustrates in two different concrete examples the motivations of human striving in face of the divine reality. In both cases it situates human existence in the perspective of those divine powers with which it has to contend. Oral epic tradition is essentially concerned with values. It pursues a quest for the ultimate meaning of a universe in which man is both solicited and challenged by forces which thwart his ambitions and orient him towards a destiny which he cannot escape. It is the revelation of divine designs which confers on human actions and motivations their final import. In the case of Visvamitra, his whole career prepares him to be the master under whom young Rama will be initiated, just as the career of Ravana in the *kṛta yuga* is ordained towards the confrontation in the *tretā yuga* between Viṣṇu made man and the demon who is the embodiment of evil.

In order to fathom the true dimension of the epic, it is necessary to

recapture, behind the written text, the message of a long oral tradition and to abandon the misleading conception of an "original" literary composition cut off from its roots.

This article should be read as a complement to a previous article, "Calliope and the Epic of Ravana" published in *JJCL*, 11, 1973, pp. 45-92.

All quotations from the *Balakanda* are taken from *The Valmiki-Ramayana*, Critical edition, vol. I, Baroda, 1960.

- 1 See Nabaneeta Sen, "Comparative Studies in Oral Epic Poetry and the *Valmiki-Ramayana*: A Report on the *Balakanda*", *JAOS*, LXXXVI, (Oct.—Dec. 1966), 397-409, and "The *Valmiki-Ramayana* and the *Raghuvamsam*: Stylistic Structure of Oral Poetry as Contrasted to Classical Poetry", *JJCL*, vol. 8, 1968, 85-95. It is hoped that Dr. Sen will pursue her research in this important field.
- 2 Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, New York, 1965.
- 3 A. B. Lord, *op. cit.*, p. 99.
- 4 The first, in our knowledge, to mention this legend is Cicero, *De Oratore*, III, 137: "(Pisistratus) qui primus Homeri libros confuses antea sic disposuisset dicitur ut nunc habemus."
- 5 Paul Mazon, *Introduction à l'Iliade*, Paris, 1967, p. 138.
- 6 A. B. Lord, *op. cit.*, p. 100.
- 7 *id.*, p. 220.
- 8 E. R. Dodds, *Bacchae*, 2nd. ed., Oxford, 1960, Introduction, p. 1.
- 9 For the *Uttarakanda*, see my article "Calliope and the Epic of Ravana", vol. 11, 1973, 45-92.
- 10 Mircéa Eliade, *Naissances Mystiques*, Paris, 6th. ed., 1959. p. 10-11.
- 11 These formulae form, as it were, the articulations of the narrative and usually mark the beginning of a new incident or of a new instruction in traditional lore. In one case, the formula develops into a beautiful description of the night (I.33 15-18)
- 12 Another version is more explicit (note 1208, p. 345) :

Athāham yajñavāṭasthaḥ kadācid vyomavartmagām  
Menakām apsarāḥśreṣṭhām nirīkṣyaitad vyacintayam  
yadyapatyaṁ bhaved aśyām mama syāt tadapīdṛṣam  
evam cintayatastatra vīryaṁ me nyapatat kṣitau  
tato vāhayataḥ kṣetraṁ phālagrād utthitā kṣiteḥ.

[One day, from the sacrificial ground, I saw the peerless apsara Menaka passing through the sky. And I thought, "It would be fine if I could get a child from her." As I was lost in that thought, my seed fell on the ground. Then, from the soil which I was tilling arose Sita, emerging from underneath the plough-share.]

Rāvaṇa's genealogy : Prajāpati—Pulastya—Viśravas—Rāvaṇa.  
Viśvumitṛa's genealogy : Prajāpati—Kūsa—Kūśanābha—Gādhi—Viśvāmītr

- 14 See "Calliope and the Epic of Ravana", p. 52.

THEMATIC STRUCTURE OF EPIC POEMS  
IN THE EAST AND IN THE WEST :

Speaking of Indian epics, Jan De Vries commented in 1963: "The products of Oriental culture often make a bizarre impression upon Western man. This applies to Indian plastic art no less than to Indian thinking and Indian literature. Everything tends to assume the most luxurious forms of a tropical forest. ...The epic poetry of the Indians, too, strike us as strange. We feel at home in the *Iliad*. There we find a sense of proportion. ...In the *Mahābhārata* we get entangled."<sup>1</sup>

A tropical forest is what came to the mind of Johann Jakob Meyer as well, 33 years before De Vries wrote the above passage. Meyer, too, talks about the larger Indian epic, *Mahābhārata*, in exactly similar images: "Like an Indian jungle it spreads out before us in an endless wilderness of trees entwined and tangled with rank creepers, coloured and scented with manifold flowers and blossoms, and the home of every kind of living creature. Howling bird-song, the terrifying cries of wild beasts, fall on our ears ; the poisonous snake winds its coils besides the mild dove."<sup>2</sup> A multitude of hair-raising wonders seem to pile up in the Western mind at the very idea of approaching an Indian epic.

Superficially, there would seem to be much truth in this contrast between the Indian epics and the epics of the Western world. The grotesque gods with their many arms, their demoniacal faces and strange attributes, appearing persistently, the nerve-shattering details, catalogues, and the end-

less digressions in the narrative combine to produce a "bizarre" and exotic picture. In this paper I shall argue that this contrast is a shallow one. Indeed the Indian epics fit closely into the general pattern of basic themes that have emerged from the recent studies of world epic poetry, dealing mainly with Western epics.<sup>3</sup> When a Western scholar asserts that "*Iliad*, *Chanson de Roland*, *Nibelungenlied*, these belong to a different world, the Western World, while in Hindustan an Oriental mentality gained the upper hand in epic,"<sup>4</sup> he is both exaggerating the distance between the Indian and the Western epics in terms of general thematic (and formulaic) picture, as well as overlooking the differences between the Western epics in their thematic details. Is the *Chanson de Roland* that close to the *Iliad*, or even to the geographically and historically closer *Nibelungenlied*? Is the Western world of *Kalevala* markedly similar to the Western world of *Beowulf*? There are, of course, similarities between these Western epics and a sharing of a common thematic fund does exist. But this thematic sharing is not confined to Western epics only, it holds just as strongly for the Indian epics as well. The Epic World cannot be that superficially demarcated by geographical or cultural distinctions. The oral tradition all over the world shares a common style of composition, and therefore there are deeper affinities than obvious differences between the epics of the East and the West.

It should be mentioned here that thematic similarity is only one of the two aspects of oral composition, the other being formulaic qualities found in the text. To fulfil the needs of rapid oral verse-making, repeated use of the same words, phrases, word clusters or close variants of word clusters having the same metric value, is common to the oral poets of the world. For the same reason, they use a common fund of themes, and clusters of themes as building blocks of the narrative. I have tried to demonstrate elsewhere that the formulaic similarities between the Western epics explored by Parry, Lord, Bowra, Kirk, and others, apply to the Indian epic *Rāmāyaṇa* as well.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, in the formulaic style of composition, Valmiki, the mythical 'author' of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, lauded as the *ādi kavi* (the first poet) of India, differs from the classical Sanskrit poet Kalidasa in much the same way as Homer differs from Virgil. In the present paper I shall be concerned with thematic similarities only, ignoring the formulaic affinities, but to understand fully the parallelism between the Indian and the Western epics from the point of view of oral literature, the two theses would have to be viewed together. (For establishing the oral origin of any text, a thematic study is hardly enough, the formulaic analysis is what makes the stronger distinction. However, in this paper I shall not go into the question of establishing the question of the oral origin of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, though I feel a thematic study



will help to reopen the question of the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s being a literary text (*ādi kāvya*) or more of a 'romance' than a heroic poem.)<sup>6</sup>

In this thematic analysis I shall be concerned with the *Rāmāyaṇa* rather than with the *Mahābhārata*, the other Indian epic. Though the two are often viewed as twins, the *Rāmāyaṇa* is much shorter, also older, in terms of the terminal date (200 B.C.—200 A.D.), consisting of 24,000 couplets, while the *Mahābhārata* (as the name itself implies, 'great India') has 107,000 couplets according to the uncritical editions, and took 800 years to be composed (400 B.C.—400 A.D.). Hence the *Rāmāyaṇa* is textually more easily manageable for our purpose.

"The first step in thematic analysis," says Professor A. B. Lord, "must be to prove the existence of themes in the poem. We must find the same situations repeated at least once. The method is the same used for formulaic analysis, but the units are larger and exact word for word correspondence... is not to be expected."<sup>7</sup> Lord defines a theme as "not any fixed set of words, but a grouping of ideas."<sup>8</sup> These are the foundation stones upon which the epic monument is to be raised. The monuments may vary in their architectural embellishments but the foundation structure is roughly the same everywhere.

Several scholars have picked out various themes common in epic literature. After having a look at as many available lists as possible, I have drawn up my own list, trying to make it as comprehensive as I can. But first, let us have a quick look at the others.

De Vries mentions J. G. Von Hahn's book of 1876, *Sagwissenschaftliche Studien*, as probably the first book to carry the scheme of a heroic life, "a complex of motifs" numbering thirteen. The next one he mentions is Lord Raglan's *The Hero* (1936), which had twenty-two motifs of primary and secondary importance, but not consistently sorted out.<sup>9</sup> The pattern of a heroic life that De Vries gives us in 1963 has ten characteristics<sup>10</sup> from the begetting of the hero to his death.

There is another most interesting list of themes used in the Celtic epic tradition. There were two such lists already existing in the tenth century, where tales "are grouped according to the subject with which they are concerned as in a modern index of folktale types."<sup>11</sup> Alwyn Rees and Brinley Rees have collated the two extant medieval versions of it, and produced a new list of thirteen themes that are common to both lists, and six themes

that are found in either of the two. The lists were of pri-  
secondary stories, the primary stories being seventeen.<sup>12</sup>

The lists that I have drawn contain only those themes that seem to be the commonest among the wide world of oral epics, varying immensely in time and place, but not that much in style and spirit. Each country has its own particular types of themes that lend the local colour, answering the specific demands of the local religious and cultural patterns. Thus, the Germanic and the Celtic, the Babylonian and the Slavic will naturally differ. But the basic thematic core on which the epic structure rests, provides the point of similarity. It is not hard to uncover it under the dense tropical foliage of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Some themes are concerned with the pattern of the hero's life, and some others merely carry the narrative forward; these are mechanical devices for traditional story-telling, just as the hero has a traditional routine of his life's works. Bowra has discussed a number of such themes, as narrative devices of oral epic poetry, in chapters V and VII of his *Heroic Poetry*.<sup>13</sup> Lord has shown the existence of well-defined categories in Serbo-Croatian oral songs (as in the Old Celtic), such as weddings, rescues, returns, capture of cities, etc. At times some of them mingle or overlap creating a more complex structure.<sup>14</sup>

In the *Rāmāyaṇa* we find a mingling of various categories. There are weddings, abductions, rescues, sieges of cities, journeys, long wars, exiles, and returns — the length of the epic allows a high degree of complexity in its structure. But if we look at it closely, we can recognize common and familiar themes, overlapping, or multiplying, giving the impression of novelty. In spite of its famous "high moral standard," the *Rāmāyaṇa* has retained a great deal of the heroic ethos, and shows the kind of inconsistency which would not be tolerated in a truly literary text. In oral poetry "each separate scene tends to develop its own character and to have its own fulness. It is therefore not surprising that it may sometimes cause contradictions in the main narrative — the oral poet does not tidy up his loose ends"<sup>15</sup> as a literary poet can and does.

The usual problem presented by the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s "high moral standard" is its obvious contrast with the raw heroic standards of the *Nibelungenlied*, or *Beowulf*, or even the *Iliad*. One is reminded of the spiritual East and a cloud of mystery and mysticism seems immediately to blur the academic vision. Not that didactic passages are lacking in the Western epics — remembering that the *Song of Roland* is based on crusading, and that *Beowulf* kills a pagan demon, — even in the pagan-souled *Nibelungenlied* church-going is a common occurrence, and Etzel's paganism is a big question in Kriemhild's mind. While there is frequently a continuous strain of Christian

ideology in the background in later Western epics, heroic principles get the upper hand in them. It is superficially the other way round in the *Rāmāyana*. While the principles of a heroic society loom large in the background, showing its face in Kiskindhya, Lamka, even in Ayodhya and Mithila, the Brahministic moral principles seem to gain the upper hand. But this apparent reversal need not confuse us and a close examination will reveal the parallels.

In the *Rāmāyana* we find that often the basic intentions are non-heroic but the actions through which the purposes are fulfilled, are heroic. Rama goes to his exile in order to honour his father's word to his step-mother. But the life in the forest and the war it leads to is heroic matter. In *Beowulf*, the hero comes to kill a demon, but the demon turns out to be God's enemy, an heir to Cain's sin, and a horrid pagan. Something similar happens again in the *Rāmāyana*, when we see that by killing Ravana, Rama is ridding this world of a great evil. Those who insist that an oral epic must have a heroic ethos at its base, should look for it mainly on the battlefield, where the heroic society is functioning at its highest peak. In other portions epics generally reflect a medley of ideas.

Let us make a rough dissection of the Rama story: birth, training, initiation, marriage, adventures (exile, war), triumph, and death of the hero. This is how the epic is constructed, like most other heroic songs dealing with a mythical hero. It begins with the supernatural birth of Rama, takes him through several contests, killing demons, acquiring arms, winning a wife, exile, abduction of wife, preparing for a war, crossing the sea, a great war leading to the rescue of wife and the destruction of evil, return, and miraculous death. Hence the life-pattern of the hero is intricately involved with the structural pattern of the poem.

Themes of heroic poetry can be divided into two groups, viz (A) those belonging to the pattern of the hero's life, and (B) those belonging to the narrative pattern of the poem. In the first group I have taken fourteen themes (the thirteenth one has a number of sub-themes attached to it), and in the second group I have included twenty-four.<sup>16</sup>

#### GROUP A Themes connected with the hero's life-story

- Hero's supernatural birth
- Hero's flaw, or someone else's flaw that he has to suffer for or atone for ; hero's vulnerability
- .. His youthful exploits, precocious childhood
- 4. Encounter with dragons
- 5. Crossing a stretch of water: (a) boatman, (b) boat-building, or (c) using other means of crossing

6. Deep friendship with a comrade-in-arm
7. Death by substitution
8. Near-death and resurrection
9. Hero's animal-connections, including bird-connections
10. Sacred-marriage, or eternal partner-seeking
11. Special weapons, magic, or divine help
12. Exile, or long war, and return
13. Journey into the other world: (a) reason for going: (i) a quest (fame/knowledge/bride); (ii) to overcome evil; (b) warnings; (c) guardians; (d) danger from water, fire, darkness, mountains, snakes, demons, poison; (e) near-death and resurrection; (f) freedom through outside agents (woman/trickery/divine help)
14. Hero's death: (a) heroic (in battle), (b) miraculous, supernatural

## GROUP B

1. Abduction of a woman: rescue, marriage
2. Bloody battles described
3. Single combats described
4. Journeys, stop-overs described
5. Breaking of a taboo, and punishment
6. Disguise, recognition, and proof of identity
7. Cosmic disruptions in anticipation of disasters
8. Divine rejoicing at the hero's success
9. Detailed description of horses, chariots, army arrangements, arms, armours and number of soldiers (catalogues)
10. Boasting of warriors
11. Mutilation
12. Winning a bride
13. Lamentations
14. Descriptions of feasts, festivals, gifts (catalogues)
15. Descriptions of wealth, castles, palaces, cities (catalogues)
16. Siege of a city
17. Council: (a) starts action, (b) after disaster, (c) during war; counselling
18. Prayers for divine help; thanksgiving
19. (a) Jealousy, (b) treachery, (c) revenge
20. Dreams as omens
21. Messengers
22. Family trees
23. Stories of the Creation
24. Singer of tales

We shall take the *Rāmāyaṇa* side by side with 12 epics (10 European and 2 Near-Eastern epics), and try to examine how many of these well-established epic themes are common to them. There are two charts, corresponding

to Group A and Group B. The epics taken for thematic comparisons are: 1) *Rāmāyaṇa*, 2) Creation Epic (*Enuma Elish*), 3) *Gilgamesh*, 4) *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, 5) *Beowulf*, 6) *Nibelungenlied*, 7) *Chanson de Roland*, 8) *Kalevala*, 9) Serbo-Croatian oral songs, 10) *Digenes Akrites*, 11) *El Cid*, 12) the *Ulster Cycle* of Celtic songs, 13) Song of Igor and some Russian Byliny.

We should, perhaps, remind ourselves once more here, what is meant by 'themes'. A 'theme' is a structural unit in oral poetry.<sup>17</sup> The need for rapid composition forces the oral poet to depend on a fixed stock of themes that the audience and the poet are both familiar with, so that anticipation, presentation and appreciation can fall smoothly in a line. There are, of course, differences in the style of repetition of the themes — the form is variable, through (a) elaboration or simplification (the same thing told with less or more details); (b) juggling with the order in a sequence; (c) substitution of one theme by another very similar, or of a group of details by another; (d) another, not too common but recognizable, variation is a kind of reversal or transference (e.g. the theme commonly used in connection with the hero, used in connection with the antagonist). Multiple use of a single theme is a common feature of oral poetry.

It is not hard to recognize a theme, being used as a structural unit, in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Some similarities with the Homeric poems have been noted by others. It has been compared to the *Iliad* for its core of the abduction and rescue plot, but G.R. Levy claimed it to be an epic of 'quest' like the *Odyssey*, and felt that the other comparison is superficial.<sup>18</sup> The Chadwicks had also compared it to the *Odyssey*, or, Rama's adventures in the forest can be compared to Odysseus' adventures on the sea.<sup>19</sup> As a matter of fact its size allows it to contain both an *Iliad* and an *Odyssey*. In its episodic portions it is like the *Odyssey*, and in its core of the epic battle, it resembles the *Iliad*. Apart from Rama, it has a number of other heroic characters (as in the *Iliad*). Ravana, the antagonist, is in fact even more of a typical 'epic hero'. Indrajit, Ravana's son, is perhaps an even greater warrior with a superhuman brilliance and a youthful glamour about him. Hanumat, the glorious monkey-hero, is another one who steals the epic show every now and then. The levels of complexity are many.

Quite often we find here the themes that are usually related with the hero's experiences transferred to the experience of the adversary.<sup>20</sup> In a Serbo-Croatian wedding tale a willing woman is abducted, as in the *Iliad*. But unlike in the Serbo-Croatian tales, in Homer the abduction leads to the total destruction of Troy. The same thing happens in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Usually the epic hero, like the tragic hero, has a flaw, or a point of vulnerability which causes his downfall. Here, Rama is flawless, but a tragic flaw lies

in the nearly flawless antagonist Ravana.

Ravana abducts Sita (Rama's wife) using disguise and a deceptive story, reveals his identity, undertakes a journey, uses magic and trickery, proves his valour by overcoming various dangers on the way, succeeds in reaching his majestic 'golden city' with the booty. An 'abduction story', complete in itself, has all the common themes that are grouped together, except that the woman here is unwilling and no marriage can take place.

Then begins the 'rescue story' with another hero. There is lamentation, search, preparation for a war, messengers, a journey to the other world for news of wife (but using a substitute hero for this sub-theme), getting an army ready, building a bridge, bloody battle scenes described through single combats, near-death and resurrection, mutilation of enemies, victory, lamentation of the vanquished party's women, return of the wife from a long absence, the tests to prove her chastity (like Odysseus' tests to prove his identity), and a return to the capital after the long exile. Hanumat's journey to the other world is an exciting tale by itself. He crosses a stretch of water, fights dangers (water, fire, demon, guards, even mountains appear but with a changed role), admires the palace, continues the search, finds the abducted wife, proves his own identity to her, delivers message, is nearly captured and nearly burnt, escapes through divine help, uses magic often, and returns with the news. Thus substitute heroes there are plenty of, both on the side of the hero and in the enemy camp. Like the poet of *Iliad*, the poet of *Rāmāyaṇa* is not stingy about strengthening the opposite camp with heroes of the first order. They are not all-evil Grendels and Marsilas, but more complex, like Gunther and Hagen, perhaps.

*Iliad* is short and compact, because it deals essentially with one topic, the wrath of Achilles. It describes only 50 days in the tenth year of the siege of Troy. Besides, Achilles is a secondary hero in the Trojan tale. In that sense, the *Rāmāyaṇa* includes a number of *Iliads*, or a number of subordinate heroic tales with several secondary heroes. Valin, for example, is another monkey-hero of great splendour, and so is his brother, Sugriva. In the *Iliad* Achilles is already grown up, the long war has been on for nearly 10 years, and all the background about the abduction, or the judgment of Paris, is cleanly omitted. The listener is expected to have previous knowledge of everything. Similarly, if any one heroic tale is picked out of the *Rāmāyaṇa* we shall see an equally concentrated, compact piece of heroic poetry. What some scholars have called "digressions" are often subsidiary tales. There is an innumerable multiplicity of themes. So many demons to kill, so many journeys to undertake, so many hermitages to admire and so many hermits for the heavenly nymphs to seduce. And there are endless sexual exploits

of the two lecherous emperors, Indra among the deities and Ravana among the demons. Any one tale can be pulled out to the acceptable size of a *Song of Roland* or a *Beowulf* (even to an *Iliad*).

There is probably more than one reason for this kind of cycles-within-cycles structure of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The *Iliad*, as we find it today, is thought to be only a part of a larger epic cycle of which the rest is lost, but glimpses of which can be caught in the ancient Greek drama. The classical tragedy cycles bear a hint of the huge epic material that was once present in Greece. The *Aeneid* is another source for us where the original epic is reflected. There must have been other heroes like Achilles (e.g. Aius and Telamon), and other heroic tales of similar thematic structure must have existed in the complete cycle. The 'epic memory' that we cannot quite grasp in Homer, is amply present in the tale of Rama.<sup>21</sup> The epic material is not fragmentary there; it is a complete set of tales, a complete cycle.

Bowra, talking about repetitions, says that in some cases "emphasis is the special task of repetitions."<sup>22</sup> It is not the multiplicity of themes that he is considering here, but we remember the statement anyway when we find Levi-Strauss offering a similar explanation for thematic repetitions. The repetitive process brings out the underlying thematic pattern more clearly, making the basic structure visible.<sup>23</sup>

Bowra also gives another reason for the series of actions and episodic quality of a longer epic (which necessarily involves multiplicity of themes). He points out that it is a question of scale. "When it is a short lay or a short epic, one single crisis is enough. But for a longer epic a series of crises are necessary, hence the technique becomes episodic. But the art of the poet is to see to it that the episodes hang together and ultimately produce a single result. Not all poets succeed in this, though most make an attempt at it. the closer the connection (between the episodes) the better the construction."<sup>24</sup>

Let us now have a look at the charts, observing the *Rāmāyaṇa* side by side with 12 other well-known epics of the world. From the first chart, the following pattern emerges :

**GROUP A**

14 themes, 13 epics

<i>Themes</i>	<i>appears in</i>
1. Hero's supernatural birth	
2. Hero's flaw, or vulnerability	
3. Hero's youthful exploits, precocity	
4. Encounter with dragons etc.	
5. Crossing a stretch of water	
6. Deep friendship with a comrade etc.	
7. Death by substitution	
8. Near-death and resurrection	
9. Animal, bird connections	
10. Sacred marriage, or eternal partner seeker	
11. Special weapon	
12. Exile, or long war and return	
13. Journey into the other world	
14. Heroic, or miraculous death of hero	

The occurrences of the different themes in the 13 epics are presented with concrete examples in the chart. The frequency varies from 6 to 13. However, each of these themes is present in the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

We turn now to the second chart :

**GROUP B :**

24 themes, 13 epics

	<i>appears in</i>	<i>no. of epics</i>
1. Abduction etc.		
2. Bloody battle descriptions		
3. Single combats		
4. Journeys, stop-overs descri		
5. Breaking taboo, punishment		
6. Disguise, recognition, identity established		
7. Cosmic disruptions		
8. Divine rejoicing		
9. Description of horses, chariots, army arrangements, arms, armours etc.		
10. Boasting		
11. Mutilation		
12. Winning a bride		
13. Lamentations		



14. Descriptions of feasts, gifts etc.
15. Description of wealth, palaces, cities
16. Siege of a city
17. Council, counselling
18. Prayers for divine help
19. Jealousy, treachery, revenge
20. Dreams as omens
21. Messengers
22. Family trees
23. Stories of the creation
24. Singer of tales

Here the frequency varies from 5 to 13, *all* themes being found in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Since our lists have been drawn from recent studies of world epics, mostly Western, the presence in *Rāmāyaṇa* of all these familiar epic themes is quite significant. Scarcely a vindication of the Indian epics belonging to "a different world". The *Rāmāyaṇa*, in fact, is the only one among the 13 epics that contains all the 38 themes analyzed in the two charts.

We have previously seen the clear outlines of the 'abduction tale' and the 'rescue tale'. Let us now take another earlier example in the gradual development of the tale of Rama. In all the epics where the story starts from the supernatural or unusual birth of the hero, there is a group of themes that follow, representing an initiation motif. This usually involves (1) separation from parental care, (2) contests, (3) acquisition of arms, (4) victory over a wild beast, dragon, or demon, and often includes (5) winning a bride and (6) acquiring a new name. It proves the worth of the hero's training and his precocity, and announces his entry into manhood. In the tribal communities this initiation ceremony still exists on a ritualistic level. This need not remain a part of the literary epic which is produced by a different, a non-heroic society, a social order which has entered a different phase in time. We find this in the *Nibelungenlied*, in the *Ulster Cycle* and the *Fenian Cycle*, in the Serbo-Croatian songs, in the Russian *Byliny*, in *Digenes Akrites*, in *Gilgamesh*, etc. Of course in poems where the hero is already grown up, this part is naturally absent, as in the *Song of Roland*, *El Cid*, or *Beowulf*.

This theme-grouping is present in the Indian epics as well. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* Rama's heroic initiation begins with his journey with the sage

Visvamitra into the forest to kill the female demon Tadaka, and the demon brothers Marica and Subahu, who were creating endless disturbances in the meditations of the ascetics. Dasaratha, Rama's father, is reluctant to let him go since he considers Rama too young (not yet sixteen) for such adventures, but Rama (1) ventures out with the sage, (2) succeeds in overpowering the evil demons and freeing the ascetics of their constant dangers, (3) gains a number of very special weapons of supernatural powers, (4) appears in an extremely difficult contest in the court of King Janaka and (5) wins a wife, Sita. He does not acquire a new name, but there is a mingling and a variation of three themes here. First, a multiplication of the theme of overcoming an evil power; second, a duplication of the idea of a contest when he encounters the formidable warrior-ascetic Parasurama on his way back. Rama had to string the heavenly bow of Siva at Janaka's court, now he has to string its twin, the heavenly bow of Visnu. The whole world holds its breath while Parasurama challenges Rama and King Dasaratha begs the ascetic's favour. But Rama accepts the challenge and succeeds brilliantly. This is a point where a new name could have been given to Rama, because Parasurama had been the proved champion warrior of the country, having made the world warriorless (by killing off every one of the warrior caste, he himself is a brahmin) twenty-one times. But Rama and Parasurama have the same name (Parasu=axe) and conceivably that is why no new name is given, only Dasaratha says ('Punarjatam-tadamene') that he considers Rama to be 'reborn', which is the same idea.

The initiation story of the Eastern hero is in no way stranger and more bizarre than that of the Western hero. Only there is one novelty; it is the role of the sages. The ascetic as a guide-initiator of the epic hero lends a new light to the old story. It is the hermit and the themes connected with the hermit that make the *Rāmāyaṇa* apparently different from the Western epic, in spite of the staggering thematic resemblances that we have scanned.

Though the hermit lives outside the regular urban society, he performs a definite social function. In the society of Rama the ascetics have an important role even though we can call it a 'heroic society' (as there is enough evidence to prove that the social and moral preferences revealed in the actions represent the value-system of a heroic society). There are some themes very common and often duplicated in Indian epics which are totally absent in the Western tradition. These largely spring from the hermits. Here are some examples. (1) The theme of hermits performing harsh penances to gain superior spiritual power, and being intercepted by heavenly nymphs (*apsaras*) sent by the frightened Indra, king of gods. (2) Having lost the result of his penance through a moment's carnal weakness, the irate ascetic

proceeds to curse the poor apsara for her misbehaviour. (3) When the apsaras are unsuccessful, as they sometimes are, the ascetic gains exceptional spiritual prowess as a result of his austere meditation. (4) The theme of kings and queens (and gods and demons as well) visiting the hermitages in the deep forests. (5) The theme of Yajnas or religious sacrificial ceremonies being performed by kings with the help of the ascetics. (6) Themes of rebirth, and time-defeating memory (there are several Tiersiases in the Indian tradition; all the top sages are capable of a knowledge of the past and future).

The hermit does represent a moral level of a different kind, but before we go into the discussion of that, let us view it first from an angle more familiar in the Western tradition. True, there are no Indian style hermits in the Western epics. But in Homer, we have seen that at the beginning of a new adventurous task, guidance is provided by a god or a goddess. Here, the sage serves the purpose. They are the ones who start the actions in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, as the gods do in Homer. The sages bring about new turns in the story, by cursing or blessing according to their will just like the Homeric gods. The Olympians are celestial beings acting on a semi-human level. The ascetics are human beings, functioning on a semi-divine level. This peculiar amphibious quality is freely shared by the Greek gods and the Indian ascetics. Looked at from this angle, the sages do not appear to be that much of a contrast.

However, to get back to the point of difference, the ascetics lend a complexity to the simple heroic idea of human prowess. It is not by mere physical strength that a man is a hero. Another depth, another richness is added to his personality. The ascetic's moral prowess, his spiritual strength acquired by harsh penance, which is a training of the mind, is distinguished from the physical prowess and skill of the warrior. *Brahma vala* is far greater than the *kṣātra vala* (the spiritual power as opposed to the physical - the priest's power as opposed to the king's). There are endless stories to prove this, the best being that of Visvamitra, as a king trying to snatch away the celestial cow Savala from the sage Vasistha. Failing, he realizes the power of asceticism, and becomes an ascetic himself, not relenting until he gains *brahma vala* and is turned into a brahmin from his original caste which was the warrior caste of a king.<sup>25</sup>

In the West the source of the hero's power is often divine grace, added to (1) physical strength, (2) training, (3) courage of the hero or some other kind of supernatural source like a dragon or a Vila. This supernatural favour is usually granted for either an act of (1) courage, or of (2) kindness, or through (3) blood-relation, or (4) sexual relation, or granted as (5) an unmerited

favour. (This last idea, *aheitukī karuṇā*, or Grace, was unknown to the epic era, it came much later in the Indian tradition.) In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, also, we find that the sources of power are divinen – not only among the human heroes, but also among the heroic demons. These are gained in a similar fashion, either through the above-mentioned reasons except the last, or as (a) compensation given by a diety for some damage the diety has done to the mortal, (b) a result of an austere asceticism, a well-deserved fruit of penance.

In the *Rāmāyaṇa* we see a neat pattern of reversal. (i) The demon, Ravana, becomes unvanquishable by gods, thus gaining near-immortality through hard penance. But he has a flaw, his pride has stopped him from demanding invulnerability from the attacks of men and beasts, and this is where fate plays its part. (ii) On the other hand, the High God Visnu assumes mortality in the form of Rama in order to overcome the semi-divine demon. Since neither gods nor any ordinary being can conquer him (because of his infinite skill and courage), the gods have to appear on the scene in human garb, since he is vulnerable to human attack.<sup>26</sup>

This divine quality, the supernatural portrayal of Rama (as a cultic god rather than merely culture hero) has given rise to several scholastic wars. Some scholars such as Winternitz and Jacobi declare Books I and VII as "spurious" to the "original" core of the middle five books (which Gorresio translated) because in the former portions Rama is endowed with a supernatural personality while in the rest of the epic he is a domesticated human figure good at fighting, lamenting, and loving his wife and brothers. This is a "contradiction" that classical Sanskrit scholarship is not going to allow. The two books are therefore left out, in order to avoid contradiction, and to insist on single authorship. The lover and the warrior are acceptable to the conventional scholars, but the saviour is not for them !

The question of contradiction, however, is not relevant for the purpose of studying the oral qualities of the epic. There must inevitably be contradictions in an oral epic of 24,000 couplets (48,000 lines). We have already seen that a bit of inconsistency and contradiction is only to be expected in an orally composed poem.<sup>27</sup>

Besides, it is not exactly correct to say that there are no references to Rama as a divine being in the original core, even if we accept such a division for the sake of convenient discussion. There are several references which the scholars would again extrapolate as further "spurious" material. Even in the heart of the epic, in the Yuddha Kanda, in which the epic battle takes place, whenever the heroes are in mortal trouble (the theme of near-death and resurrection) they miraculously "remember" their divine origins and revive instantly (as Charlemagne recovers when Gabriel speaks in his ears)

to continue the battle with greater prowess. It is in these "original" books themselves, that Rama literally 'saves' Kabandha bringing an end to his curse, and Sabari is redeemed as well. Vibhisana is an immortal demon, an exception, a demon with a divine soul. Like Utnapishtim, he has acquired immortality for his perfect devotion to God. After performing the harshest penance, when the demon king Ravana faces God he asks for immortality, so does his matchless son Indrajit. But Vibhisana asks for unfailing devotion to God, and he is the one who is granted immortality as an extra boon, unasked for, since he is the truly deserving candidate, who does not wish to upset the divine order. Granting immortality to mortals is in fact reversing the divine order, hence even the gods cannot do it unconditionally, especially when the non-spiritual purpose of the ascetic is known to them. Hence Ravana and his son are granted immortality with strings attached. If this is alright, why should Rama's divine purpose be regarded as extraneous? It is only consistent with the nature of the evil that has to be overcome. Therefore, when Indra shows up with his celestial entourage at a hermitage, and meets Rama, it is not inconsistent, and it happens in the "authentic" part itself. Hanumat, the semi-divine monkey (like Enkidu?) proves to be a typical solar hero from the mythological point of view and so does Valin, the Monkey Emperor, killed at an unfair fight, by Rama.

Hence there is plenty of the supernatural in the so-called "main body" of the epic, and it is merely idle reasoning to leave out the first and the last books for the supernatural quality of Rama. If he is more supernatural in the beginning and at the closing of the epic, it is because the story demands more superhuman episodes in the beginning and in the end to introduce the divine warrior, and to conclude his semi-divine life gloriously.

I have tried to show in the earlier sections of this paper the remarkable similarity between the *Rāmāyana* and the Western epics in their repetitive thematic structures. We found that the set of traditional themes collected from the recent studies of Western epics, are all present distinctly in the *ramāyana*, while we have not found any one Western epic among the ones compared to contain them all. There can be, however, two possible objections to this approach.

First, as noted in the last section, the *Rāmāyana* also makes repeated use of some themes which are by no means traditional in the Western epics. While the significance of this distinction, as we have seen, is not obvious,

it would seem to indicate a necessity to supplement our global thematic comparisons with a detailed contrast between the *Rāmāyaṇa* and some Western epics. As we have noted earlier, there are plenty of differences among the Western epics themselves as well.<sup>28</sup> How do the differences between the Western epics themselves compare with their respective differences with the *Rāmāyaṇa*?

The second objection arises from the size of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, which permits the inclusion of a much larger total number of themes than a typical Western epic does. This objection, too, points towards the necessity of making a detailed contrast and comparison between the *Rāmāyaṇa* and some Western epics, which are also contrasted with each other, thereby allowing us to examine the pattern of *relative* similarity and difference.

In this section, therefore, I shall make a pairwise thematic contrast between the *Kalevala*, the *Iliad* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, taking one European epic from the far North, and another from a Southern corner, and judge their relative distances from the Eastern epic. We begin with a contrast between the two Western epics.

#### ifferences between the *Kalevala* and the *Iliad*.

- Kalevala* has two culture-heroes who do not die, Väinämöinen and Ilmarinen. In *Iliad* all heroes are sadly mortal.
- In *Kalevala* there is only one high god, Ukko, who grants wishes but does not appear in person. In *Iliad* the lesser gods are constantly on the scene.
- iii. In *Kalevala* there is no 'epic battle' involving two nations where thousands of human lives are wasted. In *Iliad* this is the whole story.
  - iv. In *Kalevala* the question is not one of military skill or physical prowess. The idea of heroism lies in magic and special knowledge. In *Iliad*, courage, skill and physical strength are necessary qualities for a hero.
  - v. In *Kalevala* the line of demarcation between good and evil is extremely clear-cut. Louhi, the mistress of Pohjola, stands for evil. The heroes stand for forces of goodness. In *Iliad* the Trojan heroes are by no means 'evil'. One is pained by the mutilation of Hector's body. The idea of justice of victory is quite different when gods pull the strings. Also, the problems posed by the concept of heroic values, i.e., personal valour, personal honour and humiliation, and personal pride, are bound to be different from the problems developed from a mysterious fear of unknown evil in a culture that depends on magic as its greatest weapon, just as it would be totally different from the problems of a Christian culture.
  - vi. There is a lot of serious social didacticism in *Kalevala* (e.g. advice to the bride and to the oom); there is no such thing in *Iliad*.
  - vii. In *Kalevala* the heroes perform a number of different types of work. Väinämöinen "swims to shore" along with the creation of the world, cleans the place and sows barley, plants the country, goes fishing, goes wooing (though he never succeeds due to his old age), builds boats, visits the underworld, gets secret knowledge,

recovers the stolen talisman "Sampo", constructs a musical instrument of magical power, plays it so well that the sun and the moon come down to listen to his music. He charms people, and hunts well, also cures pestilences with drugs. In *Iliad* heroes only fight, bragging, praying, lamenting, and feasting intermittently.

- viii. There is no royalty in the society of *Kalevala*, except in Pohjola (the Mistress of Pohjola is wealthy). The heroes work for their livelihood (Ilmarinen, the forger of the "Sampo" is a smith), and the life described in the didactic portions, is that of a common village community. (Kullervo in fact tempts his sister to bed by showing gold and silver; it is a poor community, too!) In *Iliad* all the heroes are of noble birth, they are all princes.

## II. Differences between the *Kalevala* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

*Ramayana*, too has two deathless heroes, Vibhīṣaṇa and Hanumat, but both are subordinate characters. The proper heroes, Rāma, and Rāvaṇa are mortal. *Kalevala*'s deathless heroes are not divine. But strangely enough, *Ramayana*'s mortal hero is divine. (*Iliad*'s mortal heroes have divine parentage.)

There is a divine purpose in the total pattern of *Ramayana*. Not so in *Kalevala*. (In *Iliad*, too, there is a divine purpose.)

Sages start actions in *Ramayana*, lesser gods appear, and act. Nothing comparable to it in *Kalevala*. (Lesser gods appear, and they start actions in *Iliad*.)

Heroic qualities of Rāma and Rāvaṇa, i.e. strength, skill, courage (present in *Iliad*) not shared by the heroes of *Kalevala*. But the magical powers of Väinämöinen and of Louhi shared by Hanumat and Indrajit. (Is Hanumat a culture hero?)

In *Ramayana* there is a complex depiction of good and evil. There are two levels. On the heroic level, it is very similar to *Iliad*, the dilemma faced by Rāvaṇa (between personal honour and general good) is quite credible, and Indrajit's unfair killing makes one sad. But on a different moral level, Rāvaṇa represents evil, like Louhi, and Rāma, doubtless, the forces of light.

Besides salvaging lucky souls, Rāma fights, laments, loves, reproduces, hunts, holds court, arranges sacrifices, humiliates and banishes his flawless wife, finally gives up his loyal brother, his comrade-in-arms, and gives up his own life along with almost the whole of Ayodhyā's population, in the waters of the river Sarayu. Unlike the heroes of *Kalevala* he is much too royal to do any mean household duties, which happily for him, Lakṣmaṇa performs. In short he is very much a king, when he is not a god. (In *Iliad*, too, the heroes are royal and do not perform domestic duties.)

Like Hector or Achilles, Rāma has a father of great importance. Heroes of *Kalevala* have only mothers.

The hermits, the double concepts of tapasyā and yajña, do not appear in *Kalevala* (nor in *Iliad*).

Nor the concept of rebirth present in *Kalevala* (nor in *Iliad*).

No epic battle in *Kalevala*, but present in *Ramayana*. (Also in *Iliad*.)

Animals talking and acting like human beings is a special feature of *Ramayana*. Not in *Kalevala* (nor in *Iliad*).

Descriptions of seasons abundantly present in *Ramayana*. Not in *Kalevala* (nor in *Iliad*).

Of these, nos. viii, ix, xi and xii are points where the *Iliad* also differs from the *Ramayana*. In i, ii, iii, iv, v, vi, vii, and x the *Iliad* resembles the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Of the twelve points of difference between the *Kalevala* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, in only four points the *Rāmāyaṇa* differs from the *Iliad*, sharing all the

other eight points with the *Iliad*. In many ways, therefore, the *Iliad* is closer to the *Rāmāyana* than it is to the *Kalevala*. Hence there is not much point in emphasizing the differences between the Eastern and the Western epics while undermining the differences between one Western epic and another.

I end with a speculative question. Having claimed to establish the shallowness of the view that the *Rāmāyana* belongs to a "different world" from the Western epics, I am still left with the question, "why are the typical Western observers so perplexed by the Indian epics?" I cannot pretend to know the answer, but a speculative question deserves a speculative attempt at an answer. I would argue that it is much less a matter of geographical and religio-cultural distance, than of distance in time. The Western mind today is in fact as far away from the Isle of Circe, the mere of Grendel, or for that matter from the nuptial bed of Brunhild, as it is from the tropical forests of Dandaka where Rama roams. It is a question of losing touch with the epic temperament. Due to familiarity with the tales in early education Homer seems easier for the modern mind to understand. But in actuality that blind poet with his epic imagination is as far away from the modern Western temperament as the Hindu sages perhaps are. Due to a lack of industrialization and a rural culture, in India there is still a living oral tradition (the reason being the same in Serbo-Croatia) and it is probably easier for an Indian villager to understand Homer, than for a Western scholar to follow Valmiki.

#### APPENDIX A

##### I. Lord Raglan, *The Hero*, London, 1936, chapter XVI, pp. 179-180

- i. Mother a royal virgin
- ii. father a king and
- iii. often a near relative of mother, but
- iv. circumstances of his birth unusual
- v. also reported to be the son of a god
- vi. attempt made to kill him at birth
- vii. but is spirited away and
- viii. reared by foster parents
- ix. we are told nothing of his childhood
- x. reaching manhood he returns to his father's kingdom
- xi. after victory over the king / and / or a giant, dragon, or beast
- xii. he is married to a princess
- xiii. becomes king
- xiv. reigns uneventfully
- xv. prescribes laws



- xvi. loses favour with gods or his subjects and is
- xvii. driven out from the city / throne, after which
- xviii. he meets with mysterious death
- xix. often on top of a hill
- xx. his children do not succeed him
- xxi. body is not buried, but nevertheless
- xxii. he has one or more holy sepulchres

P. 190: Raglan says that the main incidents of the hero's life fall into three groups: birth, accession to the throne, and death, and these correspond to the three 'rites de passage'. Here the epic hero differs from the historical hero.

II. Jan De Vries, *Heroic Song and Heroic Legend*, London, 1963, chapter 11, pp. 211-216.

- i. The begetting of the hero
  - (a) mother a virgin, (b) father a god, (c) father an animal, (d) result of an incest of a hero
  - (a) unnatural way, (b) 'unborn' (caesarian section)
- iii. the youth of the hero is threatened
  - (a) exposed, (b) saved by an animal, (c) found by shepherds, etc., (d) mythical figures
- iv. the way in which the hero is brought up
  - (a) reveals his strength, courage, etc. at a very early age, or (b) is very slow to develop
- v. Often acquires invulnerability
- vi. fights a dragon
- vii. wins a maiden, usually after overcoming dangers
- viii. expedition to the underworld
- ix. banished in his youth, returns later, victoriously
- x. the death of the hero
  - (a) dies young, (b) has his apotheosis at death, (c) dies in evil

III. Lists quoted by Alwyn and Brinley Rees, in *Celtic Heritage*, London, 1961, p. 208.

*Types in lists A and B*

- i. Destruction
- ii. Cattle raids
- iii. Courtships
- iv. Battles
- v. Feasts
- vi. Adventure
- vii. Elopements
- viii. Slaughters
- ix. Irruptions
- x. Visions
- xi. Loves

*Types in list A only*

- xii. Expeditions
- xiii. Invasion
- xiv. Caves
- xv. Voyages
- xvi. Violent deaths
- xvii. Sieges

*Types in list B only*

- xviii. Conceptions and birth
- xix. Frenzies

ist of themes from C. M. Bowra's *Heroic Poetry*, London, 1961

### 179-214 "Mechanics of Narrative"

- i. Entrances, exits ; arrivals, departures ; welcomes, farewells
- ii. Waking up in the morning ; (a) dressing, (b) arming ; retiring in the evening
- iii. Feasts (a) gifts, (b) singing and dancing
- iv. Sailing
- v. Horses and riding

### B. Chapter VII, "Devices of Narrative"

- i. Repetition of passages for stressing something within a short space
- ii. Repetition of long similes
- iii. Stock openings: (a) feasts
  - (b) knights ride abroad in search of adventure
  - (c) a flight of birds
  - (d) bringing the characters together and starti  
scenc of action
  - (e) a person coming with news
  - (f) dreams

*N.B.* Bowra leaves out a very common stock opening, *viz.*, assembly.

### V. S. Bhattacharji, "Sun-God and Soteriology," *Āṇvikṣā*, Calcut The saviour-god, sun-god's biographical characteristi

- i. miraculous birth
- ii. often abandoned at birth
- iii. infant feats.
- iv. are often great lovers
- v. killing the arch enemy
- vi. glorious death

(The pattern of the solar hero's life corresponds with the daily course of the Sun.)

## A comparative chart of common themes

## GROUP A :

	1	2	3	4
	The 'dying god': supernatural birth	Hero's flaw / or someone else's flaw he has to atone for / hero's vulnerability	Youthful exploits / (a) precocious child or / (b) threatened childhood	Encounter with dragons / beasts / demons : male / female
<i>Rāyaṇa</i>	King Daśaratha performed a religious sacrifice and pleased Lord Viṣṇu, who incarnated himself in four parts and was born as four sons of Daśaratha. Eldest was Rāma. Hanumān was born out of a god's lust. Sugriva and Bālin too were extramarital conceptions.	Rāma suffers for Daśaratha's sin in killing the only son of the blind hermit. Rāvaṇa's vulnerability in the hands of men and animals. Pride.	(b) While still a boy (under 16), he goes with Viśvāmitra to kill the female ogre Tāḍakā, and punishes Mārīca and Subāhu. (a) Wins Sītā by performing miraculous feat of stringing the superhuman Bow of Siva. (b) Overcomes the great warrior Paraśurāma and deprives him of his heavenly abodes.	Tāḍakā, Mārīca, Śūrpanakha, Khara, Dūṣaṇa, Bīradha; Kabandha; finally Rāvaṇa and his retinue. The ultimate evil.
<i>HEATON EPIC</i> <i>Uma Elish</i>	All heroes are gods: as well as Tiamat, has a special birth.		Marduk a wise precocious child, exceptionally gifted ('haloes of ten gods')	Tiamat's monsters.
<i>Gilgamesh</i>	$\frac{2}{3}$ god, $\frac{1}{3}$ man. Mother the goddess Aruru. Enkidu created by Aruru.	Gilgamesh (a) falls asleep and loses plant of immortality, (b) breaks taboo, kills divine Bull.	Gilgamesh was a destructive, troublesome youth. (Unusual)	(a) Humbaba. (b) Bull of Ishtar.

<i>Iliad</i> and <i>Odyssey</i>	Achilles has a goddess, Theis, for mother.	Achilles' heel, wrath.	Achilles'	Cyclops, Circe, Calypso, Sirens, Charybdis.
<i>Beowulf</i>		Pride.	Mentions a number of youthful exploits, including long, dangerous swims.	(a) Grendel. (b) Grendel's mother. (c) Dragon.
<i>Nibelungenlied</i>	(a) Siegfried born of an incestuous marriage, and (b) made invulnerable by dragon's blood. (c) Brün- hilde (Walkyrie). [Christ the only miraculous birth?]	Siegfried's back a vulner- able point. Pride of Kriem- hilde.	Siegfried was a wonder- child.	(a) Dragon-killer. (b) Brünhilde-tamer.
<i>Song of Roland</i>	[Christ the only iraculous birth?]	Roland's pride and short temper.	Famous warrior.	(a) Marsila. (b) Baligant.
<i>Kalevala</i>	(a) Väinämöinen created by God, swims ashore with the creation of the world. Born old. (b) Culture-hero. New hero born of a virgin (King of Caretia).	Kullervo's incest for it.		Mistress of Pohjola, Louhi.
SERBO-CROAT SONGS	(a) Musa has three hearts. (b) Muja nursed by super- natural being, gains special strength.		Little Omer's brave ex- ploits aged 12. Osman Bey's son Ahmet Bey a preco- cious child.	Ban of Zadar, Musa? Three-headed Arab in Plain of Zadar. Robbers.

<i>ones Akríes</i>	Dígenes (Twyborn) born of an Arab and a Roman.	Endless youthful exploits. Precocious child.	Kills three-headed serpent Maximo, the she-demon serpent at the well.
<i>Cid</i>		Famous tales of past valour.	
STER CYCLE and NAN CYCLE	Birth of Cúchulainn Con- chebar. (Also, Lug, Finn, in the Fenian Cycle, have unusual births.)	Cúchulainn's childhood exploits. A precocious child; wise, brave, strong, poetic. Finn also has an unusual childhood.	Encounter with Culann's dog? Scáthach, Cú Roi.
SSIAN BYLINY, g of Igor	Volx, Vuk, Dobrinja—all have unusual births.	Volx, Vuk, Dobrinja—all precocious children.	
	5	6	7
(a) Animal connections and / or (b) bird con- nections	Crossing a stretch of water. Dangers	Deep with a comrade- in-arms	Death by substitution and re-
4	(a) Monkeys ( <i>Vanara</i> , and <i>Golangula</i> , and bears ( <i>Jambūn</i> ) make Rāma's wild army that helps him win back Si ā. (b) Jātayu, Sam- pāti and Garuḍa help Rāma at three crucial moments. (c) Rāma is often compared to a lion, tiger, or serpent (epithets).	(a) Rāma, Siā and Lakṣmaṇa cross river with Guhaka on way to forest. (b) Hanumān and Hanumān encounters two she- devils. (c) Rāma and his army cross ocean to Lankā.	(a) Lakṣmaṇa's Śakti śeṣa, temporary death instead of Rāma. (b) Reversal of this, in Brahmastra—Hanumān's achievement—brings me- dicine and revives the whole army. (c) Śakti śeṣa—again Hanumān revives Lakṣmaṇa.

Tiamat creates animal-demons (lions, serpents, bulls, scorpions, sphinx, etc).	Tiamat-Kingu. Mummu-Apsu.		
Enkidu is half animal, lives with animals. Gilgamesh compared to "a bull".	Unapishtim the boat-man. Gilgamesh and Enkidu.	Enkidu dies for Gilgamesh and wakes up as an old man.	
Compared to beasts of prey, for valour. Heron a good omen. Circe changes heroes into animals. Falcon drops snakes on the battlefield.	Odysseus spends 10 years at sea, coming across new dangers. Achilles and Patroclus. Paris and Hector.	Patroclus for Achilles. Hector for Paris.	Achilles fights a river, is almost overcome. Hector revived by Apollo. Odysseus.
Grendel's 'paw', Beowulf's 'grip' and the name 'wulf'.	(a) Beowulf comes from across ocean, from Denmark. (b) Grendel's den is under a lake; Beowulf swims to it.	Aeschere and Hrothgar. Beowulf fights for Hrothgar.	Beowulf almost overcome in Grendel's mother's den; saved by a sword found there.
Siegfried understands language of birds. Kriemhilde dreams of falcons and bears.	Hagen and Gunther cross the Danyub (killing the boatman) on horseback. and Siegfried.	Gunther and Siegfried wins Brünnhilde for Gunther, in a test of valour as well as in bed.	Siegfried nearly dead in Brünnhilde's bedroom.
Dreams of leopards, bears, dragons, falcons.	Oliver and Roland.	Roland, for Charlemagne.	Charles reassured by Gabriel, regains strength.

9

8

6

(a) Escape from Tuonela.  
(b) Escape from Pohjola.  
(c) Lemminkäinen dies, is cut into pieces; his mother brings him back to life.

Vainämöinen and Ilmarinen. Lemminkäinen and Tiera.

Vainämöinen builds boat, crosses water on horseback, goes on a ship.

(a) Vainämöinen and the bear. (b) Vainämöinen and the great pike. (c) Eagle from Lapland saves Vainämöinen. (d) Lemminkäinen and the elk, steed, and swan of Hiisi. (e) Louhi as eagle, etc.

Mujo and Halhi. Fatima fights for Alija. Freedom from the prisoners of Zadar; Mujo Sultan. Marko fights for the Sultan.

(a) Musa has three serpents in his three hearts. (b) Falcon helps Marko. (c) Mujo's white horse with wings. (d) White hounds and serpent heal Mujo's wounds.

Outruns hares and stags, kills and catches wild animals with bare hands. Crosses the Euphrates.

The Cid's two daughters are nearly dead and are resurrected.

The Cid and Martin Antolinez. The Cid and Minaya Alvar Fanez.

(a) The Cid tames a lion. (b) Hawks and falcons.

(a) Name 'Cid', 'hound' of Culann, who catches live deer and swans. (Finn too.)

Compared to wolves.  
 (b) Foals and Cúchulainn, King of Birds, Conair and birdmen.  
 (c) Conall (wolf).

Volx—werewolf. Vuk—his wolf-hair. (The names mean wolf.) Dawn, Kayala, Danyub. Igor and Vsevolod compared to "grey wolves", to falcons, and to bulls.

10

(a) sacred marriage, or  
 (b) eternal partner-seeker

11

(a) special weapon, or  
 (b) magic

12

(a) exile and return, or  
 (b) long war (= removal) and return.

(a) Journey to the forest; beasts.  
 (b) Journey to Lanka, the land of demons.

(a) Rāma's exile and return after 14 years.  
 (b) Sītā's exile and return.  
 (c) Bharata's removal and return.  
 (d) Sītā's sons' exile and return.  
 (e) Sītā's abduction and return.

(a) 1. Daśaratha and his wives. 2. Rāvana and Mandodari. 3. Rāma and Sītā (b) 1. Rāvana. 2. Sūratkha.

(a) Heroic: Indrajit, Rāvana, etc. (b) Miraculous: Lakṣmana, Rāma and others. So is Sītā's. All commit suicide, i.e. voluntarily give up their lives. (Even the people of Ayodhya!) Fin de siècle, *yuga samkranti*.



Tiamat, Apsu. Lahmu-Lahamu.	(a) Marduk's net, four winds and spear. Bow, arrow, quiver. (b) Tiamat's monsters eleven. (c) Magic spell.		
(a) Gilgamesh rejects Enkidu (reversal). (b) Enkidu is civilized and humanized through a prostitute. (c) Ishtar, eternal partner-seeker.	Shamash sends his special winds to Gilgamesh as special weapon.	(a) To the land of Utnapishtim and returns to Uruk forest after long absence.	Enkidu has a divinely planned death. Early death. Gilgamesh misses immortality.
Penelope and Odysseus. Hector and wife.	Achilles' spear and shield. Odysseus' bow.	Odysseus' return after long war.	Death of Hector, heroic. (a) To Troy. (b) Islands of Circe, etc. (c) To Hades to meet Tiresias.
(a) Hrothgar and wife. (b) Hygelac and wife.	(a) The 'Hunting' sword. (b) Mail coat. (c) Giant's sword. Weland the smith.	Beowulf's return from Heorot to Denmark.	Beowulf's heroic death, after killing the dragon and earning his board.
Kriemhild, Etzel. Kriemhild, Siegfried. Brünnhilde, Gunther.	"Tarnkappe" the magic cloak. "Balmung" sword. ("Gram" sword.)	Trip to land of Brünnhilde and to Etzel's country.	Siegfried's sudden death, killed out of jealousy.
Roland and his betrothed, Aude (who dies forthwith!).	Swords: "Durendal" (Roland), "Joyeuse" (Charles), "Hauteclaire" (Oliver), "Precieuse" (Baligant); lance "Maltet" (Baligant).	To the land of Saracens, Saragussa.	Roland's sudden death; dies young. Marsilia's sad death.

10	11	12	13	14
(a) Ilmarinen. (b) Väinämöinen.	Ilmarinen forges the Sampo, and Kantele magic.	Kullervo's exile, removal and return. (sad !)	(a) To the land of Pohjola. (b) Inside the body of Vipunen. (c) Tuonela.	Kullervo's suicide. Väinämöinen and Ilmarinen do not die—culture heroes. Väinämöinen sails away to a land between earth and heaven.
Mujo, Halil, Marko—eternal partners—seekers.	(a) Marko has a special sword forged by a smith. (b) Kaitaz—charms of Capt. Dojkie, sword. (c) Fatima's golden rod.		(a) Prison. (b) Baghdad. (c) Zadar.	
Digenes and Evdokia.				Early death, at Sudden disease.
The Cid and his wife. The Cid's daughters' second marriages.	Two special swords: "Tizon" and "Colada".	The Cid's exile and return.	Saragossa.	
Derdriu and Noishiu.	Special weapons used by Cúchulainn (hereditary—father's weapons); spear that kills him. Every satire is itself a weapon.		Land of Scáthach.	Heroic death of Cúchulainn—but predicted.
Bride-seekers. Igor's wife Yaroslava.	Dobrinja's helmet. Volk, Vuk—magic.		Land of Tartars, Polovitsies for Igor. Land of Sultans for Volk, Vuk, Dobrinja.	

1	2	3	4
Abduction of a woman. Rescue marriage	Descriptions of battles	Single combats described	Journeys and stopovers described
Abduction of Sītā by Rāvaṇa. Rescue of Sītā by Rāma, through war. Reference to other human and celestial women abducted by Rāvaṇa.	In Bala Kāṇḍa, Kiskindhā Kāṇḍa, Arāṇya Kāṇḍa, Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa ; and a whole Kāṇḍa (Yuddha) devoted to this. <i>Passim</i> (formulaic).	Between Rāma's warriors and Rāvaṇa's chiefs (Yuddha Kāṇḍa). Vālin and Rāma. Paraśurāma and Rāma etc.	Each of Rāma's stopovers on way to forest described ; also Bharata's when he goes to meet Rāma. Hermitages. Hospitality (formulaic) ; Guhaka, Agastya, Ahalyā.
	Bloody Battle-scene.	Tiamat and Marduk.	
		Gilgamesh and Enkidu. Gilgamesh, Enkidu and Humbaba. Enkidu and Bull of Heaven.	Gilgamesh's journey : each stage, each stopover, formulaically described.
Paris abducts Helen. Siege of Troy. Rescue of Helen.	<i>Iliad</i> abounds in it, <i>passim</i> (e.g. Bk X). <i>Odyssey</i> slaughter of the suitors.	Menelaus and Paris. Hector and Patroclus. Hector and Achilles. Etc.	Odysseus' stopovers build up story of <i>Odyssey</i> . Tele-machus' journey, stopovers.
Abduction of warriors by Grendel. Fight.	Bloody battle-scenes.	Beowulf and Grendel, Grendel's mother, Dragon.	Getting off and on the ship described.
Brünhilde won by Siegfried for Gunther.	Bloody battle-scenes <i>passim</i> .	Dietrich with Gunther and Hagen. Brünhilde and Gunther (Siegfried unseen).	Journeys from Nibelung to Rhineland. Stopovers described. Rhineland to

---	3	4	Siegfried and Fafnir, Nibelung. Rhineland Hagen, Brünhilde, Hagen Etzel's land. and Dancwart. Dancwart and Boedelin.
<i>Song of Roland</i>	Bloody battle-scenes <i>passim</i> .		
<i>Kalevala</i>	(a) Kullervo seduces sister. (b) Väinämöinen's betrothed, Aino, kills herself. (c) Lemminkäinen carries Kylliki away by force. Marriage.	Lemminkäinen and mistress of Pohjola. Joukainen and Väinämöinen.	Lemminkäinen and mistress of Väinämöinen's journey. stopovers.
SERBO-CROAT SONGS	Abduction of Nastasija, by Gol Alia. Marriage. Abduction of Ali Bey's three children.	Bloody battle-scenes <i>passim</i> . Song of Baghdad. Battle of Kosovo. Recovery of Ali Bey's children.	Marko and Musa. Mujo and Dojic. Kaziaz and Dojic. Mujo and Robber. dad; to Zadar. Etc.
<i>Digenes Akrites</i>	Evdoxia abducted by Digenes; and married.	Bloody battles described.	Digenes and Maximo.
<i>El Cid</i>	The Cid's daughters injured by the Heirs of Carrion. Rescued.	Bloody battles with Moors described.	The Cid with Bucan. Antolinez with Galve. Bermudez and Fernando. Antolinez and Diego. Gustioz and Gonzalez.
ULSTER CYCLE and FENIAN CYCLE	Graine and Diarmaid. Derbina and Noisliu.	Bloody battles described.	Cúchulainn and Scáthach, Aife, Cochar, Caife, Cu Roi. Scáthach's country.

1

Dardriu and Conchobar.  
Bláthnat abducted by Cú  
Roi, rescued by Cúchulainn.

ny, or	Bloody battles described in <i>Song of Igor</i> .	Breach of taboo, and punishment	Disguise and recognition	Cosmic disruptions in anticipation of disasters	Divine rejoicing at the hero's success	Detailed descriptions of horses, chariots, army arrangements, arms, numbers of troops
(a) Dášaratha kills Andhamuni's son. (b) Indra cheats Gautama. (c) Ravana steals other people's women.	(a) Kuśa and Lava as hermits. (b) Ravana as brahmin. (c) Mārīca as a golden stag. (d) Indra as Gautama. (e) Indrajit's invisibility. (f) Kum- bhakarṇa explained as "a machine". (g) Ahalyā as invisible or as a stone. (h) Māyā Sita/Rama's head.	<i>Passim</i> . Before each single combat, during Yuddha Kāṇḍa. Before meeting Paraśurāma, in Bala Kāṇḍa (formulaic); before meeting demons in forest (Araṇya, Ayodhya); when Sītā is carried off; etc.	<i>Passim</i> . At each suc- cess of Rāma, wit- nessed and celebra- ted by a divin crowd.	<i>Passim</i> in Yuddha Kāṇḍa, of Ravana's military preparations, of the Vānaras' contin- gent, of the bears, etc.	Tiamat was plotting against her children, and is punished by them.	Gods hold feasts, kiss and congratu- late. Description of Mar- duk's armours, storm- chariot, special wea- pons, etc.

5	6	7	8
Killing the divine bull was breach of taboo. Punishment, death of Enkidu.	Gilgamesh changes skin at Faraway land.	Gilgamesh dreams of cosmic disruption in anticipation of Enkidu's death.	The opposite.
Several in <i>Odyssey</i> (Aeolian bag of winds opened; Sun-god's cattle slaughtered).	Odysseus disguised as beggar. Heroes in Circe's island. Patroclus in Achilles' armour. Trojan horse, Athene as Mentor.	Described, during the war. Omens before slaughter of suitors.	Gods rejoice whenever their favourites win. <i>Passim</i> .
Enters den of dragon.			On a much smaller scale, but enough description.
Kriemhilde discloses Siegfried's point of vulnerability.	Siegfried as Gunther, in winning and taming Brünhilde Hagen as the boatman's brother		Horses, arms, armour, army arrangements.
Kullervo's incest.	Kullervo and his sister. Jouhankainen's sister as a fish. Väinämöinen changes shapes. Louhi changes shapes.	Gabriel talks to Charles in dream, congratulating him!	Names of horses, horns, swords, etc.; numbers of troops: on both sides.
<i>Others: e.g. Helli drinks beer and his horse-chains are golden.</i>	<i>Fatima as Mujo (pearl necklace). Kartaz as Kertaz's wife, against her (golden arm).</i>		Description of horses, arms, forces, arrangements, tactics.

6

Dulic, Osmanbeg, Ljubovic (pearl tambourines). Meho as Viennese standardbearer.

10. DA	Serpent in disguise of young man.		Details of arms, horses, armours, clothes, jewellery.
11. EC	The Heirs of Carrion surprised as friends.	Bad omens when the Heirs of Carrion start with their wives.	Description of horses, arms, numbers of the Cid's troops, tactics.
12. UC & FC	Cuchulainn dies by breaking several taboos — "gesse".	Bird men. Swan-maidens. Signs of cosmic terror appear before Cúchulainn goes to his last battle.	Description of horses, arms, forces.
13. RB, Sol	Volx, change shapes. Dobrinja as beggar.	Before Igor starts, there are cosmic disruptions — a portent of his failure. Three descriptions. Before each day's warring begins, cosmic disorders.	In <i>Song of Igor</i> .
	Boasting of warriors in preparation for war	Mutilation (even after death)	Lamentations
		Winning a bribe	Descriptions of feasts, festivals or gifts (catalogues)

	10	11	12	13	14
1. RAM	<i>Passim</i> in Yuddha Kāṇḍa. Kumbha-karṇa Hanumān, etc (formulate).	(a) Śūrpanakhā's and (b) Ayomukhī's nose, ear (and breasts) cut off. (c) Kumbhakarṇa's nose and ear cut off. (d) Bīrā-dha's two arms broken off with mere fist-power. (e) Jaiṅgyu's wings, side, feet, cut off. (f) Rāvaṇa's ten heads severed. (g) Rāvaṇa's arms severed (grow again).	Rāma wins Śītā by stringing Bow of Śiva. Sugriva wins back wife Rumaṅgā by killing Vālin.	Dāśaratha's lament for Rāma, Kausalyā's lament for Rāma. Śītā's lament for Rāma. Rāma's lament for Lakṣmaṇa. Tārā's lament for Vālin. Bharata's lament for Rāma. Rākṣasī's lament for the dead warriors of Laṅkā. Rāvaṇa's lament for Indrajit.	Rāma's wedding, coronation preparations, birth-yajña ceremony. Rāma gives away cows and wealth. Description of yajñas.
2. CE	Marduk boasts before going to kill Tiamat.	Tiamat's body trampled on, cut to pieces. So also with her eleven helpers. Apsu's head severed.			Gods' feasts described (III, VI).
3. GIL	Enkidu and Gilgamesh.	Tears out heart of heavenly bull. Cuts down head of Humbaba.		Gilgamesh laments for Enkidu is feasted. Enkidu.	
4. I & O	Exchange of boasts—ings between warriors.	Mutilation of Hector's body. Cutting off Dolon's head. Suitors' brains scattered by Odysseus.	Odysseus has to win his wife back—(a) archery test, (b) proof of memory.	Achilles for Patroclus. Priam for Hector. Odysseus bewails his fate. Penelope for her husband.	Feasts and gifts often described. Festival of Poseidon at Pylos. Feasting with Circe. Feast with Alcinous. Gifts from Alcinous. Feast of Penelope.
5. INO	Beowulf boasts to—	Beowulf's jaw broken	Beowulf's marriage to	Beowulf for Aeschere.	Feasts at Beowulf's



	Grendel.	like talons. (b) Beowulf cuts off the dead Grendel's head in his den.	Grendel.	's court.
6. NIB		Clean-severing of heads at battle with Huns. Throwing corpses out of the hall. Gunther's, Hagen's, Kriemhilde's heads severed.	Kriemhilde wins Brünnhilde for Gunther (a) in combat, (b) in bed. He wins Kriemhilde.	Wedding-feasts of Kriemhilde and Brünhilde. Feast at Etzel's. Gunther's festival. Kriemhilde's festival in Etzel's land.
7. SoR	Roland, Ganelon, and Marsila's nephew boast.	Marsila's arm torn off. Thierry's face mutilated. Ganelon tied to four stallions.	Charles laments Roland. Roland's fiancée, Aude, laments Roland and dies.	Catalogue of gifts offered by Marsila to Charles. Marsila's feast.
8. KAL	Boasting of Lemminkäinen.	Lemminkäinen's body cut into pieces by Mistress of Pohjola.	Väinämöinen wins bride (Jouhankainen's sister, mistress of Pohjola's daughter) but cannot marry. Lemminkäinen wins a bride but is killed unjustly. Ilmarinen wins a bride, instead of Väinämöinen.	Kullervo's sister for the misunderstanding. Jouhankainen's sister for marrying Väinämöinen. Kullervo's lamentation.
9. S—CS	All the heroes boast of their physical prowess.	(a) Mujo's body split in two to the waist. (b) Marko cuts off smith's arm. (c) Omer cuts off Gavran's head. (d) Bodies thrown out of windows, heads thrown down staircases.	Ali Bey's wife for her children. Mujo wins a bride. Hall wins Nastasija. Ljuovic wins a bride.	Wedding feasts. Drinking bouts.

10	Boasting of Digenes.	11	Digenes chops Maximo's horse.	12	Protects wife (wins over Maximo but does not marry).	13	Lamentation of Digenes before his death.
	Boasting of warriors.		The Cid cuts Bucan through his helmet to his waist. So does Antolinez with Galve.		The Cid's daughters are won without heroism by a pair of cowards who lose them. ( <i>Reverse</i> .) Re-marriage of daughters, but to <i>outsiders</i> .		Lamentation by the Cid's wife, by Dona Sol. Feasts and gifts at the Cid's wedding. Gifts of spoils of war gold, and wealth won by the Cid. The Cid's gifts to his daughters and to guests at his wedding.
	Cúchulainn is boastful.		Cúchulainn cuts off head of Cú Roi, also of three sons of Nechia Scene. Heads of Derrriu's husband and brothers cut off.		Cúchulainn wins brides and lovers—Aife, Scáthach, Fard, Uathach, etc. Emer.		Cúchulainn goes to a festival at Cúlaonn's. Bri-criu's feast. Other feasts.
					Volx, Vuk, Dobrinja, win wives.		Description of peaceful festiveness after return of Igor.
15	Descriptions of wealth; property, castles, palaces, cities (catalogues)			17	Council or assembly (a) starts action, (b) after disaster, (c) during war. Counselling	18	Prayers for divine help
							(a) Jealousy (b) Treachery (c) Revenge

1. RAM	15 Description at each as- rama: there are many. Description of Ayodhya at the coronation. Lanka as seen by Hanumān. Lanka as shown by Rā- vana. Palace of Sugriva— in Kiṣkindhā. Several hermitages. Rāvana's palace.	17 Council of Daśaratha's brahmin counsellors, for childbirth. Daśaratha's council for Rāma's coro- nation. Vasīṣṭha's coun- cil for Bharata's corona- tion. Rāvana's counsils, Rāma's council and the banishment of Sītā. God's counsils. Starts with a council.	18 Often. Rāma to Durgā, Meditations of Rāvaṇa, Indrajit, and the hermits. Sītā's prayer to river, etc. Agastya, Viśvāmitra, her- mits, give Rāma divine weapons.	19 (a) Kaikeyi's jealousy. (b) Sūrpanakhā's re- venge. (c) Vālin and Sugriva: treachery, re- venge. (d) Vibhīṣaṇa—a traitor? Sugriva—treachery to Vālin?
2. CE	Siege of body and founding of universe.	Gods' assembly. Mumuk- counsils Apsu, Kingu counsils Tiamat, Ea counsils Marduk.	Gods pray to Marduk for help.	Ki u advocates Tia- mat's revenge for Apsu's death. Marduk avenges gods by killing Tiamat. Other gods jealous of Kingu.
3. GIL	Ishtar's promises of wealth and honour to Gilgamesh.	Enkidu dreams of an assembly of gods.	(a) Men of Uruk ask for divine help to be rid of Gilgamesh. (b) Gilga- mesh asks Shamash for help to beat Humbaba and (c) the divine bull.	Ishtar takes her revenge on Gilgamesh by (a) sending Bull of Heaven, and (b) making Enkidu die.
4. I & O	Plenty in <i>Odyssey</i> .	Siege of Troy.	Council of Zeus and other gods. Councils of warriors on both sides ( <i>Iliad</i> ). Assembly of the men of Ithaca. Starts with an assembly (both).	Achilles' revenge on Aga- memnon for Briseis, on Hector for Patroclus. Odysseus' revenge on Pe- nelope's suitors. Chry- ses' revenge on Aga- memnon for Chryseis.

5. BEO	15 Description of Hrothgar's Mead-Hall. Description of Hygelac's court.	17 Assembly of Hrothgar. Councils of Hygelac, Beowulf and Wiglaf. Starts with an assembly.	18 "God gave the luck of the battle to the Geats. He furnished them with help." See 10.	19 Unferth's jealousy. Beowulf avenges death of Acschere. Grendel's mother's revenge.
6. NIB	Description of Nibelungs' wealth; the gold. Description of Brünhilde's attire; horse's jewels; palace, castle, warriors' jewels.	Assembly.	Everyone goes to church.	Hagen's treachery. Brünhilde's revenge. Kriemhilde's revenge. Brünhilde's jealousy.
7. SoR		Councils of Charles, Marsilla, and Baligant. Councils of warriors. Starts with one council, ends with another.	Charles prays to Gabriel. Gabriel speaks to Charles in battle. Archbishop Turpin starts the battle.	Ganelon's treachery. Baligant's revenge (Ganelon says it is revenge).
8. KAL		Counselling by mother.	Prayers to Ukko, Jumala.	Mistress of Pohjola's treachery to Väinämöinen, to Lemminkäinen.
9. S-CS	Siege of Baghdad, Budapest, etc.	Council of warriors in the pub. Counselling by mother, sister.	Help from Vila (Mujo). Help from Ragged War-rior.	Jealousy. Revenge on Ban of Zadar.
10. DA			Saints help Digenes.	
11. RAM	Descriptions of wealth. Castle of Alcoer. The Cid watches the city of Valencia with the ladies (87).	Valencia taken: Ce-bolla; Murviedro. The Cid watches the city of Valencia with the ladies (87).	The Cid and his wife pray in church. Bishop Don Jerome starts the battle (117).	Treachery of the Heirs of Carrion to the Cid and his daughters. Envy of Ordenez.

<sup>19</sup> Domnall's mis-shapen daughter. Domnall's revenge on Cúchulainn for refused love: cf. Ishtar, Sūrpānakhā.

RB, Sol

Yaroslavna's prayer.

Vuk's revenge.

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24

Dreams as omens		Messengers	Family trees	Creation-stories	A singer of tales (Bard)
<b>RAM</b>	Trijaṭa's dream of Rāvaṇa's death. Bharata's dream of Daśaratha's death.	From Janaka to Daśaratha, Ayodhyā to Bharata, Mantharā to Kaikeyī, Sūrpānakhā to her brother, Saramā to Sitā, Hanumān to Sitā, Hanumān to Rāma, Śuka and Sārana to Rāvaṇa.	Family trees of the Ikṣvākus, of Rāvaṇa, of the gods, of the demons, and of the birds (Jatāyū, Sampāti).	Creation-story of the universe.	Lava and Kuśa.
<b>CE</b>		Gaga, messenger of the gods.	Gods' family tree the whole list.	Creation Epic ! Story of the beginning of the universe.	
<b>GIL</b>	(a) Gilgamesh has two dreams anticipating Enkidu's arrival. (b) Gilgamesh has two dreams about conquering Humbaba (one is lost). (c) Gilgamesh has an ominous dream	A hunter brings news of Enkidu.		Some partial creation-tales.	Bards sing.

of Enkidu's death. (d) Enkidu dreams of his own death twice: 1. council of gods, 2. bad omen.

	Hermes, Eumaeus.	Family trees of heroes and gods.	Demodocus.
(a) Athene's dream to Penelope. (b) Achilles dreams of Patroclus. (c) Penelope's dream of 20 geese and a great eagle. (d) Zeus sends Agamemnon a false dream. (e) Penelope of Minerva as sister. (f) Telemachus, of Minerva.			
	Beowulf himself a messenger from gods.	Family trees of Hrothgar and the Geats.	Reference to the creation-story.
(a) Kriemhilde dreams of a falcon and two eagles. (b) Kriemhilde dreams of Giselher.	Messenger for Etzel to Kriemhilde (Rüdiger). From Kriemhilde to Gunther (two messengers) an invitation.	Family trees of the Niflungs, etc.	Bards sing at feasts. Hagen cuts off fiddler's right hand. A minstrel of Gunther's volker is a hero.
Charles' two dreams before the battle (56, 57). Gabriel sends dreams to Charles (185, 186).	From Marsilia to Charles (Blancardin). From Charles to Marsilia (Camelon).		Bards sing. "Turolidus".

Creation of the universe. *Völundsmol* sings.

15	Description at each āśrama: there are many. Description of Ayodhyā at the coronation. Lankā as seen by Hanumān. Lankā as shown by Rāvana. Palace of Sugriva—in Kiṣkindhā. Several hermitages. Rāvana's palace.	17	Council of Daśaratha's brahmin counsellors, for childbirth. Daśaratha's council for Rāma's coronation. Vasiṣṭha's council for Bharata's coronation. Rāvana's councils, Rāma's council and the banishment of Sītā. God's councils. Starts with a council.	18	Often. Rāma to Durgā. Meditations of Rāvana, Indrajit, and the hermits. Sītā's prayer to river, etc. Agastya, Viśvāmitra, hermits, give Rāma divine weapons.	19	(a) Kāikāyī's jealousy. (b) Śurpanakhā's revenge. (c) Vālin and Sugriva; treachery, revenge. (d) Vibhīṣana—a traitor? Sugriva—treachery to Vālin?
	Siege of Tiamat's body and founding of universe.	Gods' assembly. Mummu counsels Apsu, Kingu counsels Tiamat, Ea counsels Marduk.	Gods pray to Marduk for help.		Kingu advocates Tiamat's revenge for Apsu's death. Marduk avenges gods by killing Tiamat. Other gods jealous of Kingu.		
	Ishtar's promises of wealth and honour to Gilgamesh.	Enkidu dreams of an assembly of gods.	(a) Men of Uruk ask for divine help to be rid of Gilgamesh. (b) Gilgamesh asks Shamash for help to beat Humbaba and (c) the divine bull.		Ishtar takes her revenge on Gilgamesh by (a) sending Bull of Heaven, and (b) making Enkidu die.		
	Plenty in <i>Odyssey</i> . Siege of Troy.	Council of Zeus and other gods. Councils of warriors on both sides ( <i>Iliad</i> ). Assembly of the men of Ithaca. Starts with an assembly (both).	Achilles prays to Thetis, Thetis to Zeus, Odysseus to Athene, Chryseides to Apollo, Telemachus to Athene.		Achilles' revenge on Agamemnon for Briseis, on Hector for Patroclus. Odysseus' revenge on Penelope's suitors. Chryseides' revenge on Agamemnon for Chryseis.		

BEO	15	16	17	18	19
	Description of Hrothgar's Mead-Hall. Description of Hygelac's court.	Siege of the Dragon's lair.	Assembly of Hrothgar. Councils of Hygelac, Beowulf and Wiglaf. Starts with an assembly.	"God gave the luck of the battle to the Geats. He furnished them with help." See 10.	Unferth's jealousy. Beowulf avenges death of Aeschere. Grendel's mother's revenge.
NIB	Description of Nibelungs' wealth; the gold. Description of Brünhilde's attire; horse's jewels; palace, castle, warriors' jewels.		Assembly.	Everyone goes to church.	Hagen's treachery. Brünhilde's revenge. Kriemhilde's revenge. Brünhilde's jealousy.
SoR		iege of Saragossa.	Councils of Charles, Marsilla, and Baligant. Councils of warriors. Starts with one council, ends with another.	Charles prays to Gabriel. Gabriel speaks to Charles in battle. Archbishop Turpin starts the battle.	Ganelon's treachery. Baligant's revenge (Ganelon says it is revenge).
KAL			Counselling by mother.	Prayers to Ukko, Jumala.	Mistress of Pohjola's treachery to Väinämöinen, to Lemminkäinen.
S-CS		Siege of Baghdad, Budapest, etc.	Council of warriors in the pub. Counselling by mother, sister.	Help from Vila (Mujo). Help from Ragged Warrior.	Jealousy. Revenge on Ban of Zadar.
DA				Saints help Digenes.	
RAM	Descriptions of wealth. Castle of Alcazar. The Cid wishes the city of Valencia with the ladies (69).	Valencia taken; Cebedolla; Murviedro.	The Cid's councils. Starts with one council ends with another.	The Cid and his wife pray in church. Bishop Don Jerome starts the battle (117).	Treachery of the Heirs of Carrion to the Cid and his daughters. Envy of Ordono.



Domnall's mis-shapen daughter. Domnall's revenge on Cúchulainn for refused love: cf. *Ishlar*, *Sūrpānakha*.

## B.R. Sol

Yaroslavna's prayer. Vuk's revenge.

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REAM	20			23	24
	Dreams as omens	Messengers	Family trees	Creation-stories	A singer of tales (Bard)
	Trijata's dream of Ravana's death. Bharata's dream of Dasaratha's death.	From Janaka to Dasaratha, Ayodhya to Bharata, Manthara to Kaikeyi, Sūrpānakha to her brother, Saranā to Sita, Hanumān to Sita, Hanumān to Rama, Suka and Sarana to Ravana.	Family trees of the Ikṣvākus, of Ravana, of the gods, of the demons, and of the birds ( <i>Jatayu</i> , <i>Sampāti</i> ).	Creation-story of the universe.	Lava and Kuśa.

## CE

Gaga, messenger of the gods.  
Gaga's family tree given — the whole list.  
A Creation Epic!  
Story of the beginning of the universe.

## GIL

(a) Gilgamesh has two dreams anticipating Enkidu's arrival. (b) Gilgamesh has two dreams about conquering Humbaba (one is lost). (c) Gilgamesh has an ominous dream  
A hunter brings news of Enkidu.  
Some partial creation-tales. Bards sing.

20

of Enkidu's death. (d) Enkidu dreams of his own death twice : 1. council of gods, 2. bad omens.

	Hermes, Eumaeus.	Family trees of heroes and gods.	Demodocus.
(a) Athene's dream to Penelope. (b) Achilles dreams of Patroclus. (c) Penelope's dream of 20 geese and a great eagle. (d) Zeus sends Agamemnon a false dream. (e) Penelope of Minerva as sister. (f) Telemachus, of Minerva.			
	Boowulf himself a messenger from gods.	Family trees of Hrothgar and the Geats.	Reference to the creation-story.
(a) Kriemhilde dreams of a falcon and two eagles. (b) Kriemhilde dreams of Gisela.	Messenger for Etzel to Kriemhilde (Rüdiger). From Kriemhilde to Gunther (two messengers) an invitation.	Family trees of the Niflungs, etc.	Bards sing at feasts. Hagen cuts off fiddler's right hand. A minstrel of Gunther's volker is a hero.
	Charles' two dreams before the battle (56, 57). Gabriel sends dreams to Charles (185, 186).	From Marsila to Charles (Blancardin). Charles to Marsila (Ganelon).	Bards sing. "Tuoldus".
			Creation of the uni-verse. Väinämöinen sings.

Two ~~scouts~~ <sup>21</sup> ~~dreams~~ Standard-bearers and  
 Prisoners <sup>27</sup> ~~take~~ in letter-carriers.  
 dream of home.

Bards sing.

Read the book of dreams. Messenger from the  
 Emir's mother.

Gabriel sends the Cid a The Cid's letter of exile ;  
 wedding proposal, from  
 King to the Cid's daugh-  
 ters ; letter to town of  
 Burgos ; Búcar's mes-  
 senger.

Bards sing of the Cid.

Family trees of Con-  
 chobar, Finn, etc.

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## NOTES

- 1 Jan De Vries, *Heroic Song and Heroic Legend* (London, 1963), p. 99.
- 2 Johann Jakob Meyer, *Sexual Life in Ancient India* (London, 1930), p. 1.
- 3 H. M. and N. K. Chadwick, *The Growth of Literature*, Vols. I-III (Cambridge, 1931-40). Lord Raglan, *The Hero, A Study in Tradition, Myth and Drama*, (London, 1936). A. B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1960); C. M. Bowra, *Heroic Poetry* (London, 1961); Alwyn Rees and Brinley Rees, *The Celtic Heritage* (London, 1961); G. S. Kirk, *The Songs of Homer* (Cambridge, 1962).
- 4 De Vries, p. 111.
- 5 N. Sen, "Comparative Studies in Oral Epic Poetry and the *Valmiki Ramayana*: A Report on the *Vāḷakāṇḍa*", (*The Journal of American Oriental Society*, 86, 4 Oct.-Dec., 1966); *idem*, "The *Valmiki Ramayana* and the *Raghuvamsam* : The Stylistic Structure of Oral Poetry as contrasted to Classical poetry", *Jadavpur Journal of Comparative Literature*, VIII, 1968.
- 6 Gertrude Levy, *Sword from the Rock*, London, n.d., p. 157; N. K. Siddhanta, *Heroic Age of India* (London, 1929), p. 31; H. Jacobi, *Das Ramayana*, tr. S. N. Ghosal (Baroda, 1960), p. 89; The Chadwicks, pp. 472, 478; M. Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature* (Calcutta, 1927), Vol. I, pp. 499, 516, 490, 475-7.

- 7 A. B. Lord, p. 145.
- 8 *Ibid*, p. 69.
- 9 Raglan, pp. 179-180. See appendix to this paper for Raglan's list.
- 10 De Vries, pp. 211-216. See Appendix for list. De Vries refers to another longer list of the fairy tale hero's life-pattern that he had published in 1954.
- 11 Rees and Rees, p. 207.
- 12 *Ibid*, p. 208.
- 13 Bowra, pp. 179-214 and 254-298.
- 14 Lord talks of theme-groupings, e.g., (1) a "return" story (from a long war or exile) has a disguise and recognition story establishing the identity), (2) a "journey into the other world" story has crossing a stretch of water, a search, dangers and warnings on the way (guards, demons), near-death and resurrection, freedom through outside help or trickery, etc. He explains that stories are built by using blocks of ideas on top of one another to build a stable narrative, e.g., a council, a messenger, a journey, a search, a war, a dragon-killing, a divine help, a special weapon, a sacred wedding, description of a feast can make a tale. Various permutations and combinations are possible in this way. Bowra, too, points out the same function of the themes in epic poetry, e.g., stock opening of which he gives 5 examples.
- 15 Bowra, p. 302.
- 16 The rough list given in the synopsis has been re-organized here. All the themes are retained, plus six more added.  
"Reserve the term theme for a structural unit that has a semantic essence but can never be divorced from its form, even if its form be constantly variable and multiform." Lord, p. 198.
- 18 *Sword from the Rock*, London, n.d., p. 157.
- 19 H. M. and N. K. Chadwick, Vol. II, p. 472.
- 20 In Sanskrit the word "pratināyaka" is used, i.e. the "other hero"
- 21 R. Antoine, S. J., "Calliope and the Epic of Ravana", *Jadavpur Journal of Comparative Literature*, XI, 1973, pp. 45-92.
- 22 Bowra, pp. 261 and 265.
- 23 "Why myths, and more generally oral literature are so much addicted to duplication, triplication or quadruplication of the same sequence. ... The answer is obvious: repetition has as its function to make the structure of the myth apparent." Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Structure of a Myth", *Journal of American Folklore*, No. 68, p. 444.
- 24 p. 337.
- 25 One must be aware here that the quality of Brāhminism can be *earned*, it is not merely a question of birth, as proved in the case of Visvāmitra. It is not mere magic that the power of the hermit implies. It is much more. It is not the favour *earned* by the priest for serving a special deity. Chryses' prayer to Apollo and the bringing of plague on the soldiers of Agamemnon is not the same as Visvāmitra's earning of the supernatural weapons, or his earning of the brāhmanic status.

Tapasyā is not a prayer. It is a demand, a proof of human will at its peak—such a titanic, powerful demand, that the Gods above have no choice but to grant him his wish, otherwise the divine order will be in danger. It is hard penance, so hard, that it can bring out the superhuman in man. Tapasyā — gained prowess is not something received through a god's 'unmerited favour', it is in fact not left to the discretion of the gods to give it or to hold it back. It is a human challenge thrown at divinity, tapasyā forces the gods to accept the mortal's claim as irrefutable. It is not the lesser gods that are involved in granting the wishes of the mortal; it is the high Gods of the Triad that face it.

The avatāra motif, the idea of God incarnating and reincarnating Himself among men in 10 supernatural forms in the 4 yugas, in order to relieve the earth of evil, and restore the divine order.

27 C.Y. Howra, p. 302.

George Dumézil, in his *Mythe et Epopée*, Vol. II (Paris, 1971) has done a comparison of Siliupala, Starkadr, and Heracles, three heroes from three corners of the world, Indian (from the *Mahabharata*), Scandinavian, and Greek. In Vol. I also he does an excellent comparison of the *Mahabharata* with other Indo-European epics, from the point of view of comparative mythology.

W. B. YEATS AND THE POETRY OF VIOLENCE

You do not need to be Irish, only to have the romantic bent of a normal boy in any age or country, to pick up the idea of heroic violence that has been indigenous in human imagination at least since civilized life began. With all its individual and national differences, it is still recognizably the same the world over : in Homer's heroes, in the extravagant exploits of the Red Branch and the Fianna of Celtic legend, in the company of the Round Table bound each on his private and particular quest and the Japanese Samurai whose code Yeats in old age remembered with admiration : "To be generous among the weak, truthful among one's friends, brave among one's enemies, and courteous at all times," a code for the strong man to live by. The heroic image is not a mere glorification of strength, though strength is its indispensable element. It comes down from times when the armed horseman or charioteer was the most powerful force in the world, and for that very reason, because no outside authority could control him, took pride in observing a law freely imposed by himself on himself. A boy whose imagination is nourished on such images will not easily become a pacifist, unless experience drives it home to him that the life of war is not like that.

The world in which Yeats grew up, the western world of the late nineteenth century, was more remote from the reality of violence than anyone born after 1914 can easily understand, and all the more for that, the old heroic image had room to flourish. The astronaut, even the aeronaut, were less credible figures than Achilles. Nowadays these contemporaries are invested with the enormous power that is the envy of the young, but because the price of it is subservience to a power external to themselves they have lost the high moral authority that anciently, in principle at least, went with power, so that the individual seems less responsible for the use of his own strength. There is a vast difference between the heroic warfare the old poets celebrated and the welter of murder—destruction by remote control at one extreme, orgies of blood-lust at the other—that is overwhelming our own time and

was already casting its shadow on the world in which Yeats grew old.

Is it better to be Homer or Achilles? That ancient question presupposes the reality of both, for without Homer Achilles would leave no memory, but Homer is a liar if he does not believe in Achilles, and less than a man if he does not sometimes envy him. So it was with Yeats. The heroic image was central to his poetry from his earliest work to *The Black Tower*, the last lyric he wrote, and the discrepancy between the image and the actuality of the modern world played a crucial part in the shaping of his philosophy. Much of the toughening of his poetry as the years went on comes from the confrontation between the imaginary and the actual. Even in early youth when his passionate experience came more from poetry than from daily life, he was never the kind of self-indulgent dreamer who could keep the two in separate boxes: unless they could be two sides of one coin both alike would be false and worthless.

He was fortunate in finding living models to confirm his faith. One lifelong influence was his early allegiance to the old Fenian John O'Leary, who embodied the heroic spirit in an unheroic generation. O'Leary had the physical beauty and bearing of an ancient sage, and the generosity of spirit that makes a man greater than any cause he serves. "There are things a man must not do to save a nation," he said, and when asked in the interests of Irish freedom to talk about his ill-treatment in British gaol he answered, "I was in the hands of my enemies, why should I complain?"

It is an easy mistake to imagine that infatuation for Maud Gonne, with her blazing beauty and her obsession with action for itself made Yeats, temperamentally a dreamer, first think of Irish freedom in terms of a violent uprising. Yeats's mind was never the slave of an infatuation. Both he and Maud Gonne were pupils of O'Leary, who in principle believed in violence: not the kind that is a breakdown of control, but the deliberate action of a man who can give or take life for something he values above it and remain fully answerable for his actions to his own spirit. Freedom as he saw it had to be won by fighting, because only battle would throw up leaders with the resolution and contempt for material gains that give a nation strength to find its soul: achieved by the manoeuvres and bargain-driving of politicians it would be wrongly led and wrongly slanted from the first. So his Irish Republican Brotherhood, to which both Yeats and Maud Gonne belonged, looked to an uprising, but not till they had disciplined themselves to undertake violence without loss of moral control.

If O'Leary confirmed Yeats's faith in heroism, he also encouraged his belief that art was as necessary to the spirit of a nation as action. "There is no great literature without nationality, no great nationality without literature,"



Yeats declared in his early twenties, and never went back on the doctrine, though his efforts to make a politically minded people respect the integrity of art cost him a lifetime of quarrels with fellow-patriots.

At the beginning, however, before experience had caught up with conviction; it seemed possible for art to walk along with action. Far the most successful of his earlier plays was *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, staged in 1903. The scene is a cottage, on the eve of a young man's wedding, which happens also to be the eve of the attempted insurrection at Killala Bay in 1798. Cathleen ni Houlihan, who is the spirit of Ireland, enters in the middle of the marriage preparations, an old, poor woman talking of the four beautiful green fields that have been taken from her; under the spell of her words the young bridegroom leaves his mother and his bride and goes out to fight. That is all. Maud Gonne played the name-part (it was the only play of Yeats's she ever consented to act in) and even in London, not to speak of Dublin, the effect was so thrilling that the Irish critic Stephen Gwynne wondered was it right to stage such plays—though there was no insurrection then impending. At the end of his life Yeats was asking himself the same question

Did that play of mine send out  
Certain men the English shot?

It probably did, for it was simple and moving enough to plant a seed more powerful than the most cogent argument about the extortions of absentee landlords. And yet today, it is hard to believe that the key speech of Cathleen as she leaves the cottage could have such power

It is a hard service they take that help me. Many that are red-cheeked now will be pale-cheeked; many that have been free to walk the hills and the bogs and the rushes will be sent to walk hard streets in far countries; many a good plan will be broken; many that have gathered money will not stay to spend it; many a child will be born and there will be no father at its christening to give it a name. They that have red cheeks will have pale cheeks for my sake, and for all that, they will think they are well paid. [*She goes out; her voice is heard outside singing.*]

They shall be remembered for ever,  
They shall be alive for ever,  
They shall be speaking for ever,  
The people shall hear them for ever.

With all the emotion of sacrifice and the music of the cadences, who could listen to it now without calling it a veil over the naked reality of war? It

is a poet's idealised dream of violence, with only the most presentable images of suffering shown, to stir the hearts of an audience as innocent as himself of all knowledge of the reality.

Ten years later, Yeats had lost faith in the possibility of heroic action in our time. He saw less and less to admire in his country's politicians, and in "September, 1913" he turned on them savagely :

What need you, being come to sense,  
But fumble in a greasy till  
And add the halfpence to the pence  
And prayer to shivering prayer, until  
You have dried the marrow from the bone?  
For men were born to pray and save  
Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,  
It's with O'Leary in the grave.

And in "The Fisherman", a year later, he contrasted his youthful dream of the country he would write for with the reality :

no knave brought to book  
Who has won a drunken cheer,  
The witty man and his joke  
Aimed at the commonest ear,  
The clever man who cries  
The catch-cries of the clown,  
The beating down of the wise  
And great Art beaten down.

His worship of the heroic ideal lies behind much of his castigation of the leaders of the crowd who travestied it, and behind his contempt for democracy, which makes a leader accountable not to his own spirit but to whatever ideals and aspirations he shares with the crudest of his followers. He was more and more exasperated by quarrels over the integrity of art, and its place in the life of a nation, with petty-minded clerics and politicians whose only criterion of value was conformity.

In fact, though his commitment to the arts was anything but a denial of nationality, it was carrying him into a different circle of friends, and pre-occupations which to the politically active seemed meaningless. As he saw it, on one side of a line were the politicians, debasing the currency of daily life, on the other the aristocratic tradition of Coole Park, preserving in the poetic imagination and in a few lonely houses the ideal of heroic action. Of Lady Gregory, in sympathy for a moment of frustration, he wrote :

For how can you compete,  
Being honour bred, with one

Who, were it proved he lies,  
 Were neither shamed in his own  
 Nor in his neighbours' eyes?

She wore her integrity so unselfconsciously that she never knew the tri was to herself.

All this was in the background of his reaction to the Easter rising of 1916. For it was not the aristocrats, but the political enthusiasts he had come to disparage, who restored heroic action to his age and country.

It is important, both to history and to the understanding of Yeats, to remember that the Easter episode was not a nation-wide uprising. Briefly, the history behind it was that in 1913, Asquith's government had passed a Home Rule Bill, giving Ireland (at that time politically part of Great Britain, with its representatives in the Parliament at Westminster) what would later have been called Dominion Status. The Act would have been carried out in 1914 if Ulster, not in those days a separate state, had not rejected it unconstitutionally and started gun-running to defend its determination to remain a part of Britain. The southern Irish naturally began counter-gun-running it looked as if civil war was about to begin, and the question everyone asked was—Would Bri in uphold the rule of law by sending troops to coerce the Ulster Loyalists into independence? One cannot help wondering how much of later history would have been different had the question been answered. It never was, for the outbreak of World War I shelved it and many of the gun-runners from both sides went off to fight against the Germans. Then came another question—After the war, presuming it was won, would Britain stick to its promise of Home Rule in the teeth of Ulster's resistance? A few optimists thought it might ("For England may keep faith. For all that is done and said," as Yeats wrote in his poem). But this too was made unanswerable by the small band of patriots who believed like O'Leary that freedom could only be taken, not given. They drilled and prepared, more or less secretly, and on Easter Sunday, 1916, when England was hard pressed in the war, they occupied the key buildings in Dublin and proclaimed the free Republic of Ireland.

It took a week for British troops to dislodge them. From the first the rebels had no chance, and knew it they had gone out to die, believing that by defeat and death they would commit their countrymen irretrievably to fight on till freedom was won. And the British, who at that point of the war could only see the action as base treachery, added the one thing needed to fulfil their faith by the severity of the punishments. Sixteen of the leaders were condemned to death; one, Constance Gore-Booth, Countess Markiewicz, had a death-sentence commuted (to her great chagrin) to life imprison-

ment on account of her sex. Along with the courage of the enterprise the executions turned what might have been just another gallant story for posterity—for after all Irish history for the past three centuries was full of such gestures of defiance, great and small—into the beginning of the final struggle.

"Tragic dignity has returned to Ireland," Maud Gonne wrote to Yeats from France, before she knew that her husband Sean McBride, from whom she had been long separated, was among the condemned leaders. Yeats felt as she did, with complex afterthoughts and reservations. In middle age he had become a man of thought rather than action, yet he of all men had cherished the heroic ideal, and it was humiliating that he had been taken into nobody's confidence. Everything he himself was actively working for needed the tranquil atmosphere the rising had destroyed, and still the greatness of the act made everything he worked for less of a dream. He would not, surely, have retracted a word of *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, but how could it not trouble him to think that when he himself had risked nothing, that very play had started some of these young men on the road to a death that was perhaps unnecessary? With all this on his mind he began to write "Easter, 1916"

It is fundamentally about the same vision of heroic violence, but years away from *Cathleen ni Houlihan* in the complexity of its truth. From one point of view—and the title deliberately underlines this—it is a generous retraction of "September, 1913"

Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,  
It's with O'Leary in the grave.

has become

All changed, changed utterly:  
A terrible beauty is born.

But in retracting he recants nothing that he truly believes. He recalls the dead, with their vivid faces, as he knew and dismissed them, too lightly, by the frivolous standards of yesterday. Their death has not changed the quality of their lives—death does not do that—but it has changed the quality of life itself, lifting it from frivolity to high tragedy where the old judgments become irrelevant. Nor has it changed in the least his dislike of the political mentality with its insensitive abstract will; only, the splendour of the deed has forced him into a revaluation. He goes for wisdom to the same place where a year or two earlier, in a moment of deep gloom, he had imagined his Fisherman

Climbing up to a place  
Where stone is dark under froth,

—and finds there his image of stone and stream, the central image of the poem. The stream is life in all its movement and variety, the stone the petrification of the political will “something other than human life,” as Blake had called it.

Hearts with one purpose alone  
Through summer and winter seem  
Enchanted to a stone  
To trouble the living stream.

And then, rising to a more magnanimous vision, he sees that this petrification of the will, like the surrender of life itself, is but part of the sacrifice demanded in the long heroic battle :

Too long a sacrifice  
Can make a stone of the heart.  
O when may it suffice?

There are moments, in history or in individual life, when the world is so transformed by something new and sudden that the old preoccupations and arguments become irrelevant. Easter Week, 1916, was such a moment for Ireland, and Yeats, over fifty as he was, with the settled tranquil habits that a writer's life imposes, had the insight to recognize and come to terms with it in his poem.

He could not foresee, in that relatively innocent age with Ireland almost insulated from World War I, how rapidly heroic violence, once let loose, degenerates into violence casual and uncontrolled. There are thirteen years between *Cathleen ni Houlihan* and “A terrible beauty is born”; only three from that to

A drunken soldiery  
Can leave the mother, murdered at her door,  
To crawl in her own blood, and go scot-free;

in “Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen”—another poem whose title marks it as part of a conscious sequence. But this too was happening and he had to come to terms with it.

In 1919 when the war was over, the English raised the notorious “Black and Tan” force to browbeat the Irish into submission. When this failed there were negotiations, and a treaty was signed by which southern Ireland without Ulster became the Irish Free State. De Valera with a large section

of the Sinn Feinn party refused to accept the partition, and the outcome was civil war, with families divided and the very men who had been through Easter Week together turning against one another. It was not till after 1923 that the civil war petered out and the Free State settled down to relative stability. Ireland's later history is outside my topic: it was in these seven crucial years that Yeats saw happening around him the epitome of what was happening, or was to happen, to the whole of western civilization.

Hitherto I have talked as if Yeats's mind was a mirror of the events and controversies raging round him, a mere reflection of his age. But a poet's mind is not like that, least of all a poet's like Yeats who could not rest without subduing all experience to a pattern that embodied his innate values. While he was meeting the shocks of reality he was fashioning the abstract vision that had to include it, and it was the interplay of the two processes that toughened his poetry.

The search for a pattern began very early. Temperamentally religious and brought up without a creed to accept or react from, he had to shape one for himself, and from the beginning his problem was to reconcile passionate experience—which at first was chiefly experience of the imaginative arts—with abstract truth. He never doubted the eternity of the human spirit, or of the spirit of mankind, distinct from its creations. But although the saint may find his reality in an abstract heaven, to the artist as to the man of action nothing is real till it is embodied, and embodiment is submission to the limitations of time and space: no outline can contain the infinite. This contradiction between time and eternity, his recognition of the second and his passionate commitment to the first, is implicit in *The Wanderings of Oisín*, is explicitly stated in a comment on the alternation of religions in his preface to Lady Gregory's *Gods and Fighting Men* in 1904, and is the theme of "Dove or Swan", the historical section of *A Vision*. He sought the pattern in history, and by some weird prescience the outline suddenly fell into shape in those famous telepathic sessions with his wife in 1917—after the Easter Rising, but before its grim aftermath could be consciously foreseen. I do not think he could have kept his balance in the collapse of his world if the philosophical system had not begun to make sense.

Even so, above all for a poet whose life and work are made meaningful by the inheritance of three thousand years, there is a momentous difference between knowing in the abstract that every civilization is doomed, and waking up to realize that doomsday is here and now. "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen", which comes to grips with that knowledge, is the most tormented of all Yeats's poems, only just hanging on to coherence. He is teaching himself to take in, first, that the world is falling which has stood

since Homer's time, and second, that the spirit of man survives the fall. Parts of it are obscure because of the density of thought packed into images ; and then one comes up against some of his most brutally direct phrases, holding the poem down to the naked desolation of fact.

Man is in love, and loves what vanishes:  
What more is there to say?

A drunken soldiery  
Can leave the mother, murdered at her door,  
To crawl in her own blood, and go scot-free.

We, who seven years ago  
Talked of honour and of truth,  
Shriek with pleasure if we show  
The weasel's twist, the weasel's tooth.

That universal "we" is not a common pronoun in Yeats's poetry. Although the drunken soldiery of 1919 happened to be English, he is not talking about the English in particular but the whole civilization of which he and they are alike parts.

The first section puts the theme in a large perspective, opening with a lament for the lost artefacts of Athens, which once seemed too perfect for time's accidents to hurt them. They are gone ; and the liberal institutions and incorruptible laws that are our pride, as Pheidias' ivories were the pride of Athens, are following them into the dark. In the subtly accurate image of Loie Fuller's dancers in Section II he distances it still further, into the astronomical cycles of the Platonic Year. Men themselves, by moving as they do, create the time-spirit that seems to control their destiny, and yet create it as it were involuntarily, because their feet cannot move otherwise than to a rhythm

All men are dancers, and their tread  
Goes to the barbarous clangour of a gong.

Difficulty for many readers begins when the second theme breaks in with the Swan who is the solitary soul.

The wings half-spread for flight,  
The breast thrust out in pride  
Whether to play, or to ride  
Those winds that clamour of approaching night.

It is an image of power, not of pathos, as no one can help knowing who knows the swan in the ancient legends of the world, or indeed who knows

flesh-and-blood swans as Yeats himself knew them. When the Swan leaps into the desolate heaven the Soul—of the poet or of humankind, microcosm or macrocosm, it does not matter how you see it—faces chaos in the certainty of its own creative strength—another life, another world-order, another nest for the rearing of its young. It was that same Swan, as Zeus, who launched the Homeric world by impregnating Leda with the twin births of love and strife, the same who drifted above the darkening flood where Coole Park and all it stood for was passing into decay—the beginning and the end of one great cycle in the history of man's soul.

But man lives in time as truly as in eternity, and his civilization that grows and dies in time is created from his passion. It does not even die in a blaze of glory, but in degeneracy and disillusion; and to the lover, watching by his beloved's deathbed, his own immunity from death is no comfort. Yeats's philosophy could reconcile him to the passing of civilizations in the abstract, but not to the death under his eyes of the Ireland he has known and loved. The mockery of Section V is pain masking itself as derision.

The poem ends without tranquillity, in cryptic visions not easy to interpret precisely. But certainly the first two are images of the degeneration of authority from the "violence of horses"—the controlled, heroic violence of the aristocracy he idealized, which has now exhausted its creative vigour—to the unrestrained, unreasoning violence of the mob. So far, it is what he knew in the history of his times. But when democracy lies dead in its own dust, as he was sure it would, what is to follow?

There lurches past, his great eyes without thought  
Under the shadow of stupid straw-pale locks,  
That insolent fiend Robert Artisson,  
To whom the love-lorn Lady Kyteler brought  
Bronzed peacock feathers, red combs of her cocks.

He tells us that the image is of "an evil spirit much run after in Kilkenny at the end of the fourteenth century"—but that gives little help in the interpretation. Nor, I think, does it matter whether or not Sean McBride was the model for Robert Artisson, for he was writing about something wider than his personal love and grievance. The picture, at any rate, is of a high-born lady helplessly enslaved by physical lust, all her ancestral breeding abused before a clown; Yeats may perhaps have recalled her to mind nearly twenty years later in the figure of the depraved mother in *Purgatory*. When all our ideals have been travestied to death, and nothing is left to die for, what can be the next stage of degradation? Nothing, surely, but naked appetite, all the values built up by tradition confounded in subhuman animal



lust. This seems to me to be his forecast of the death of civilization, which in the end would have to be made bearable by the certainty that the soul outlasts its works.

The poem is compounded of fortitude and despair, and the pressure of events is too immediate to let them fuse. But its very disjointedness shows how the growing violence of the times, degenerating so swiftly from the heroic to the brutal, kept breaking in upon the *Vision* system he was at work on while he wrote it. The system began, as probably most systems do, as a pattern in his head preceding experience ; nevertheless he had to fit in the brute facts of his experience without explaining them away.

There are other poems in which one can see how he interweaves his awareness of the actual with his abstract vision. An outstanding instance is "The Second Coming" In the first stanza the picture of the times is bare and recognizable—so recognizable that it seems to authenticate the vision of the rough beast, begotten twenty centuries ago in the sands of the desert and even now waiting his hour to dethrone the Christ Child as if Yeats's elaborate theory of the alternation of religions had sprung full-grown from his perception of the deepening anarchy of the age.

Indeed, the interplay is so close that it is sometimes difficult to say which comes before which. "Sixteen Dead Men" (1920) picks out one of the themes already latent in "Easter 1916"

O but we talked at large before  
Those sixteen men were shot,  
But who can talk of give and take,  
What should be and what not  
While those dead men are loitering there  
To stir the boiling pot?

It could, and perhaps did, grow from a straight look at Irish politics ; it is a thought that every realistic politician should take to heart in the aftermath of a revolutionary act. But the much more subjective "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen" had grown out of the same turmoil. Seven years later the same thought reappears, lifted into a cosmic context, in a song from *The Resurrection*.

Odour of blood when Christ was slain  
Made all Platonic tolerance vain  
And vain all Doric discipline.

Did the wide sweep of his philosophy teach him how to accept the actual magnanimously, or did the philosophy itself generalize a magnanimity learnt by holding to his ideals without blinking at the perversities of the actual? It is not easy to say. But when *A Vision* was published he

described it as his means of holding in one view reality and justice, and the grandeur of his best poetry is made possible by the lifelong effort to see them both.

By 1938, when World War II was palpably inevitable, the English-speaking public had caught up with Yeats's prophetic vision enough to take in the meaning of "The Second Coming". The serenity of "The Gyres", to those who read it then, must have seemed heartlessly callous. But Yeats's heart had belonged to the Ireland already dead, the Ireland of the Big House ascendancy which to him, if to hardly anyone else, had been the quintessence of the values of western civilization. He was certain—and seeing what it had come to, could not wholeheartedly regret—that the rest of that civilization was doomed to the same fate; most of his personal friends were dead; and for nearly twenty years he had reconciled himself to the knowledge of loss. Against it he put his equal certainty of eternity, that of the soul of man, and of the creative soul at the heart of chaos. How could he share the panic of the newly alarmed? He wrote from a standpoint beyond time, from which the deepening violence of the age was a broom to sweep away its muddled values and clear the ground for a renewal of heroic life.

What matter though numb nightmare ride on top,  
And blood and mire the sensitive body stain?

\* \* \*

What matter? Out of cavern comes a voice,  
And all it knows is that one word 'Rejoice!'

There is little compassion in it (compassion had never been his strongest quality), but it is neither the heartlessness of the cynic nor the mere insensitiveness of the unimaginative. It has the hardness indispensable to a man who has seen his deepest values defaced by his own generation, and refuses to admit that his own generation represents the last word of divine wisdom. The dilapidated Tower where he had lived in the Irish troubles was still his symbol of fortitude, and in his last poem, only days before his death, he is defending it against the massed banners of the world

Those banners come to bribe or threaten,  
Or whisper that a man's a fool  
Who, when his own right king's forgotten,  
Cares what king sets up his rule.

But all the same—

Stand we on guard oath-bound!

Sainte-Beuve must be one of the most underrated foreign critics in English studies today. The present writer knows of only one selection of his critical essays in English translation published in recent years, namely by Steegmuller and Guterman.<sup>1</sup> There is one popular biography by Harold Nicolson which is unfortunately out of date in its critical views.<sup>2</sup> A scholarly study by A.G. Lehman<sup>3</sup> came out more recently but it traces the progress of his career only up to 1842, thus leaving the last twenty years of his output unsurveyed. Besides Lehman's study is too minute and exhaustive for the use of every student of Matthew Arnold or Henry James who is likely to seek information about their professed model.

For Martin Turnell Sainte-Beuve, like Taine, was a product "of the French love of systems," "a propagandist for literature," "an apostle of culture to the new middle classes."<sup>4</sup> Messrs W.K. Wimsatt and Cleanth Brooks in their history of *Literary Criticism*<sup>5</sup> spare two pages for Sainte-Beuve in a volume which runs into 755 pages (a whole chapter of which is assigned to Croce). They state in their "Introduction" that in their history "the critical *idea* has priority over all other kinds of material." The emphasis is on "ideas about verbal art...its elucidation and criticism." Presumably then Sainte-Beuve has no valuable *ideas* to offer on literature.

Professor Rene Wellek, an equally influential critic, praises Sainte-Beuve for his aversion to cloudy speculation and to rigid systematization. He, however, finds fault with Sainte-Beuve for his failure to inspect a text closely, and observes that Sainte-Beuve's "method is rarely analytical."<sup>6</sup>

From the above it would appear that Sainte-Beuve has neither any aptitude for theoretical formulation nor for practical criticism. It must be admitted that Sainte-Beuve's own general statements about the nature of literary criticism are not very happy. There are enough statements to justify the strictures of his detractors. In an essay to which his editors Steegmuller and Guterman give the title "On Sainte-Beuve's Method" the emphasis seems to be on tracing the "lineage" of great writers.<sup>7</sup> He claims that bio-

graphical research enables a scholar to account for the genius and character of writers. Presumably the more we know about the sisters of Lamartine and the brothers of Boileau the better we shall understand these writers. He qualifies this by adding that the study of a writer's *milieu*, his religious ideas, his behaviour towards women and so on are equally illuminating. Even so Sainte-Beuve is not at his best in stating his own general principles. A more acceptable statement occurs in his well-known review of Taine's *History of English Literature*<sup>8</sup>

M. Taine has done nothing else than try to study methodically the profound differences wrought in the constitution of minds, in the form and direction of talents, by races, positions and periods (i.e. rather like the ancient Greek physician Hippocrates).

something still eludes him, the most vital part of man eludes him... In fine he has not reached the spark of genius in its essence. (pp. 241-42)

The thing which is called individuality of talent, genius, remains always on the outside, escaping all the meshes of the net, however finely they may be wrought. (p. 261)

This is valuable as an objection to Taine's approach to literature but somewhat dated in its positive aims. The following observation deserves to be known better. In the course of reviewing Taine's *History* he finds fault with Taine's approach to Pope. He states, "I should like in literature always to adapt our method to our subject, and to surround those who call for and demand it with particular care."<sup>9</sup>

But surely the test of the greatness of a critic is not his success or failure in stating his "method" in the abstract. The real value of any critical work depends on the light that it casts on the poem, play or novel which it criticizes.

To begin with one of the most remarkable pieces of critical writing is an extract from his review of Taine's *History* in defence of Pope :

Ought we in fairness to see Pope only "a dwarf, four feet high, contorted, hunchbacked, thin, valetudinarian, appearing, which he arrived at maturity, no longer capable of existing"? Is it right to set his bodily infirmities over against his delightful wit...? ...It is not for me to blame a critic for pointing out, even in close detail, his author's physiology and the degree of his good or bad health, which must undoubtedly influence his conduct and genius. The truth is that *Pope wrote not with his muscles but with his pure intellect.*<sup>9</sup> (Italics added)

And yet Sainte-Beuve is accused by Wimsatt and Brooks of representing "the biographical principle" in literary criticism.

Altogether Sainte-Beuve's defence of Pope is memorable for its time. To begin with he regrets that the tendency of his age is "to subordinate the

dispassionate, cultivated, polished poets, the classical authors of a former age. ...a sort of disdain and contempt is very near overtaking them." (p. 255). He does not seek to undervalue "the greatest and most primitive minds" like Homer, Dante, Shakespeare and Milton. Pope and Swift are not of the same order, but he thinks that in a history of literature "the literary part properly so called, even in what it has to offer of the premeditated and the artificial, should, of right, find place and favour." (p. 253)

This very discrimination enables Sainte-Beuve to estimate the achievement of Pope without either exaggerating or denigrating. The precision of his language reflects the accuracy of his judgment. He strikes the right note when he opens his appreciation with the observation that Pope was "one of the most delicate and beautiful literary organizations ever seen." (p. 255) The superiority of Sainte-Beuve as a critic to his distinguished English contemporary Matthew Arnold is striking. In contrast to Sainte-Beuve's carefully discriminated estimate Matthew Arnold made the mistake of comparing Pope's *Satire* II, line 143, with Hamlet's request to Horatio made at the time of his death, thereby disregarding the canons of decorum.<sup>10</sup>

Again Sainte-Beuve's estimate of Pope's translation of Homer is very subtle. He begins by stating that Homer "cannot be translated in verse."<sup>11</sup> In defence of Pope therefore he makes two points. First that although Pope's version is not Homeric it is "in itself a marvellous accomplishment." The second point is, "in translating Homer, Pope was artificial, but in reading him he was not artificial." That is to say Pope was fully sensitive to the power of Homer as evidenced in Pope's critical preface to the *Iliad*. Unfortunately it was not possible for Pope or for any other writer to reproduce that power in modern verse.

Sainte-Beuve admired in the same review Pope's "Essay on Criticism", not only for what it says but also for the manner in which Pope says it. Sainte-Beuve has no hesitation in acknowledging the justness of Horace's (and Pope's) view of poetry as a craft. In defence of Boileau and Pope whom it was a fashion to decry in the nineteenth century Sainte-Beuve says:

I conceive that all poetry may not be included in the craft ; but I do not understand that when it is a question of art, perfect workmen who excel in it should be so greatly depreciated. (p. 257)

Pope's lashing of the dunces is defended very plausibly by Sainte-Beuve. Pope's hatred of ugliness is only the other side of the coin. It was a necessary accompaniment of his love of beauty. "Perhaps no one ever felt," says Sainte-Beuve, "in so great a degree as Pope the consciousness and pain of stupid literature." (p. 259)

Sainte-Beuve demonstrates his acuteness in placing Pope's Moral Epistles above the *Essay on Man* when he says :

Where he (i.e. Pope) excelled through originality, without leaving the field of observation as truly his own, was in the moral epistles. ... Pope, like La Bruyere, with the difficulty and charm of rhyme to boot, invariably confined "the most thought in the least space": It is the principle of his style. (p. 263)

The English poet Bowles (1762-1850) had found Pope deficient in the minute and accurate observation of nature. Sainte-Beuve's defence of Pope is most effective

Pope is certainly not wanting in picturesqueness : he had a feeling for nature, he loved it, and described it in his "Windsor Forest". It is certain, however, that he was far from fulfilling the detailed programme Bowles laid down for him, and the conditions of the picturesque he exacted : Wordsworth alone possessed them. (p. 262)

This estimate of Pope was not to be equalled until Geoffrey Tillotson published his book *On the Poetry of Pope* in 1938. It is all the more remarkable that Sainte-Beuve, a French critic of the nineteenth century should have been able to give a definitive evaluation of the poet so much before any English scholar. It might be added that even such an eminent scholar as Leslie Stephen (1832-1904) was unable to do justice to Pope in his book on Pope (published 1880). What is less easy to understand is that Bonamy Dobree in his *English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century 1700-1740* (Oxford, 1959) did not even name Sainte-Beuve in his bibliography of Pope.

One of the reasons for the failure of the contemporary Anglo-American critics to do justice to Sainte-Beuve is their doctrinaire approach. One example of such an approach is the attempt to classify writers as romantic or classical. For example when Mr Rene Wellek classifies Sainte-Beuve's taste as a "somewhat romantic classicism"<sup>12</sup> he raises more questions than he answers. Presumably Sainte-Beuve borrowed from some of the German critics the criterion of "local colour". But the perception of Sainte-Beuve is demonstrated by his application of this criterion. For example he pointed to the absence of local colour in Corneille's plays which was occasioned by Corneille's observance of the unities. Corneille's characters, he observed, "never take advantage of small details such as would localize and specify the place of action."<sup>13</sup> Again he contrasts the "epic picturesqueness" and "pompous descriptions" of Racine with the local colour in Shakespeare. As an instance he quotes Banquo's remark in Macbeth's castle which concludes with the line "the air is delicate" (I.vi.9). About the *Phedre* of Racine he observes that the background of reality is missing which includes

the Greek landscape, the religious rites, the family memories and so on.<sup>14</sup> Such sensitive response to works of literature constitutes Sainte-Beuve's distinction as a critic.

The artificiality of the code of honour and love in the heroic tragedy of the seventeenth century had been noted by many critics before Sainte-Beuve. Dr Johnson for example had ridiculed it in a most telling manner in his Preface to Shakespeare. But it was left to Sainte-Beuve to characterize the two kinds of excellence noticeable in Corneille and Shakespeare. He first takes the reader aback by saying that "Chimene's love for Rodrigue is the greater not *despite* the fact that he killed her father but *because* he did."<sup>15</sup> The reader expects such subtle perception to be followed by an unqualified eulogy on *Le Cid*, but Sainte-Beuve again surprises the reader by observing that, "Shakespeare would never have invented such a situation; it is too unnatural." He thereby qualifies the praise accorded to Corneille. Such discrimination is worthy of the greatest critics.

Sainte-Beuve was no Aristotelian. He rejected the unities, gave precedence to character over plot, and disregarded many other doctrines of classicism. But like most great critics such as Matthew Arnold and Henry James he did assume that literature had a reference to experience. A writer has no right in his view to do violence to nature, especially to what we recognize as human nature.

It is not very original to state that the writer of fiction or drama should observe a certain amount of detachment from the characters that he portrays. But when Sainte-Beuve points out that Moliere's characters are not to be identified with the dramatist, he immediately carries conviction. None of Moliere's characters, he states, is himself. They are "not copies but creations."<sup>16</sup> More emphatically he asserts about *Madame Bovary*: "Among all these very real, very living characters, not one can be supposed to be representing the author."<sup>17</sup> The author, he says, is uninvolved. Flaubert is only a spectator, and the work is entirely impersonal. Sainte-Beuve is not shy of expressing a value judgment here "This is a sign of remarkable power."

Many critics have recognized that the style and the point of view are inter-related. Sainte-Beuve does not deserve any praise for originality in this matter. But the application of this principle to Montaigne's "Apology of Raymond Sebond" commands immediate assent from the reader

<sup>14</sup>This is the heart of the *Essais*: everything about it is purposeful, and the calculated tortuous sentences which say the opposite of what the author really thinks nonetheless convey it. (Steegmüller & Guterman, p 18)

In order to appreciate the weight of this statement it is necessary to point out that the above remark occurs in the course of analyzing Montaigne's style. Sainte-Beuve first points out the apparent conformity of Montaigne to orthodox religion and then adds that this conformity is undermined by Montaigne's style. Sainte-Beuve's analysis gives us a profound insight into Montaigne's belief or rather his scepticism. This is one of the numerous examples which refute Mr Wellek's accusation that Sainte-Beuve is rarely analytical. Indeed all the examples quoted above show Sainte-Beuve's skill in examining individual texts closely.

The critical vocabulary of Sainte-Beuve is not as sophisticated as that of some of the twentieth century critics. It is questionable, however, whether any real insight is gained by using a very specialized terminology. Very often the fashionable critics of today conceal old ideas in a new dress. Sainte-Beuve was a humanist. He did not think of literary criticism as a mystery or a technical discipline. In spite of old fashioned vocabulary he is able to make critical points which are as valid today as they were in the nineteenth century. For example the comparison he makes between Rousseau's *Confessions* and Chateaubriand's *Rene* is sound. The latter, he says, has "greater lushness, more poetic colour," but Rousseau's work is, in his opinion, at bottom "more real, more alive."<sup>18</sup> Rousseau, he continues, is, "more genuinely sensitive, more original and sincere." Even if we regard the words "real", "alive", and "sincere" as question-begging we must concede the essential justness of Sainte-Beuve's estimate.

Now it may not seem today that there is much courage displayed in rating Rousseau higher than Chateaubriand, but we must not forget that Chateaubriand's *Atala* and *Rene* enjoyed in the nineteenth century a vogue comparable in its unsoundness only to the vogue of such forgeries as Macpherson's *Ossian* and such vaporizing as Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther*.

Although Sainte-Beuve is more reliable when he writes about the earlier writers than when he writes about his contemporaries—limitation he shares with almost every other critic—there is no need to be apologetic about his excursions into contemporary literature. In the course of his analysis of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* he singles out for praise the episode (II.viii) in which the banality of political speeches is skilfully juxtaposed with the love making of Rodolphe and Emma. Sainte-Beuve remarks on "the pompous, turgid speech" of Monsieur Lieuvain and adds that this speech is "regularly interrupted by sentimental cooings that are basically no less banal than the official oratory."<sup>19</sup>



Admittedly Sainte-Beuve expresses the wish that Flaubert had "superimposed a coating of idealism over his implacable realism." But then Flaubert's merciless exposure of human frailty was not easy to swallow in the century of Victor Hugo. An interesting parallel is Leslie Stephen's unhappiness with the fourth voyage of *Gulliver's Travels*.

There is an instance of Sainte-Beuve's failure as a critic which is understandable but not for that reason excusable, viz. his injustice to Stendhal. It is understandable because he was not the only one of his contemporaries to underrate Stendhal. Even Henry James in 1874 could see nothing but "unredeemed corruption" in *Le Rouge et le Noir*.<sup>20</sup> Still the mistakes of Henry James and others do not excuse Sainte-Beuve's failure to appreciate Stendhal. He appears to value Stendhal as a writer of travelogues and as a critic rather than as a novelist. Presumably referring to Stendhal's achievement as a critic Sainte-Beuve says, "The credit for having destroyed some of the prejudices and ingrained habits which in 1820 opposed all innovation goes to Beyle."<sup>21</sup> He holds it against Stendhal that the latter took up novel writing after he had been a critic. He accuses *Le Rouge et le Noir* of following "certain preconceived ideas." Stendhal, according to Sainte-Beuve, "forms characters by combining two or three ideas" instead of creating living beings. The characters are "cleverly constructed automats." Although he rates the Italian stories and novels higher, he calls *La Chartreuse de Parme* "less a novel than memoirs of Fabrice and his aunt." He even makes the mistake of blaming Stendhal for the failings of Fabrice. "Fabrice is like an animal at the mercy of his appetites," he says, implying that the failings of Fabrice can be transferred to the creator of Fabrice. As a matter of fact Fabrice is not at the mercy of his appetites. He is a complex character, and Stendhal traces his development over a variety of experiences, each successive experience being more complex than the preceding one. The reader sees him grow from an amateur soldier at Waterloo to an ascetic in the service of the Church and Clelia.

It could scarcely have been expected of Sainte-Beuve to foresee that modern critics would hail Stendhal as the creator of the alienated hero, thereby anticipating Camus's *L'étranger*. Far less could he have foreseen that Stendhal would be admired for being, "one of the first European writers to diagnose the disease of power and absolutism."<sup>22</sup> But the subtlety with which *Le Rouge et le Noir* depicts the conquest of Mathilde by Julien surely could have been appreciated by Sainte-Beuve if he had approached the novel with an open mind. The success of Chapter 46 is owing to "his insight into conflicting and contradictory feelings, his blend of tenderness and irony," as Martin Turnell claims.<sup>23</sup> None of these qualities was beyond Sainte-

Beuve's range as his appreciation of other literary works shows.

Sainte-Beuve's essay on Baudelaire is largely irrelevant. By comparing Baudelaire's poems with the sonnets of Shakespeare's contemporaries he seeks to divert his attention (and the reader's) from the achievement of Baudelaire.<sup>24</sup> Sainte-Beuve was shrewd enough to observe that the characteristic of his generation was to conceal sensualism in a cloud of mysticism after the manner of Chateaubriand's *Rene*. It was not to be expected that he would sympathize with either the content or the manner of Baudelaire's daring experiments in verse. Instead of concealing sensuality in a cloud of mysticism he sought to display "the skull beneath the skin." It would be as anachronistic as to have expected Matthew Arnold (1822-88) to appreciate Hopkins (1844-89) or Samuel Johnson to appreciate *Tristram Shandy*. It could not have been foreseen in the nineteenth century that Baudelaire rather than Hugo would influence the course of future poetry in France and elsewhere.

Not that Sainte-Beuve laboured under any illusion about Victor Hugo. He was too intricately involved in the lives of Victor and Adele Hugo to be completely detached in his critical estimate. Hugo was prolific as a novelist, poet, dramatist and critic. His style was variable. He composed poetry for nearly seventy years. Sainte-Beuve's response to his poetry varied from uncritical enthusiasm to irony or reticence. But Sainte-Beuve's epigram, "Hugo seeks the heroic and falls into the merely gigantic" (quoted by Lehman), is essentially just, even about Hugo's later poems. The following lines from "A Theophile Gautier" are quite characteristic:

Pars, aigle, tu vas voir des gouffres à ton gré ;  
 Tu vas voir l'absolu, le réel, le sublime.  
 Tu vas sentir le vent sinistre de la cime  
 Et l'éblouissement du prodige éternel.

(Depart, eagle, you will see gulfs to your taste; you will see the absolute, the real, the sublime, feel the ominous wind of the summit and the dizziness of perpetual wonder.<sup>25</sup>)

"The dizziness of the perpetual wonder" bears the unmistakable stamp of Hugo's style. It was for this reason that Sainte-Beuve did not find Hugo's poetry congenial.<sup>26</sup>

In the course of his discussion of Pope's critical principles, as stated in the "Essay on Criticism", he found an opportunity of placing Hugo (and Balzac). Pope, says Sainte-Beuve, "dislikes excess" and adds in a footnote :

It is curious while considering Pope to notice what we have become through opposition to his poetics. Great geniuses have not hesitated to make a virtue of exaggeration (cf. Victor Hugo's *Shakespeare*, pp. 122-24, the very doctrine of extravagant geniuses).<sup>27</sup>

Sainte-Beuve's estimate of Balzac has also been censured. His supposed severity is ascribed by Steegmuller and Guterman to the fact that "Balzac published a scathing and blatantly ignorant and biased review of Sainte-Beuve's *Port Royal*."<sup>28</sup> But how unjust was Sainte-Beuve to Balzac? He called him "the most original, the most capable and the most penetrating of all our painters."<sup>29</sup> He praised Balzac for the "depiction of an entire society," for "subtle and delicate observation." He qualified his praise for Balzac's realism with the observation that Balzac "imagined at least as much as he observed." This was not a tribute to Balzac's imaginative powers.<sup>30</sup> In fact there is criticism implied in the remark, as there is in the remark that Balzac's world "is half-observed and half-created." This qualification gives Sainte-Beuve an opportunity for pointing out that there is a point in Balzac at which "the plexus of truth and reality gives place to illusion."

In other words Sainte-Beuve assumes that Balzac is primarily a realist whose novels on the whole portray Restoration France accurately. His only complaint is that in certain cases Balzac's exaggerations make him unconvincing. Most of the characters in Balzac's novels, however, according to Sainte-Beuve, are "profoundly true to life."

Some modern critics have presented a plausible defence of Balzac's departures from realism. Indeed it has been suggested by Mr E.J. Oliver that far from being a master of reality Balzac was a master of fantasy.<sup>32</sup> There is a fairly weighty evidence in support of this view. The protagonists of Balzac's novels such as Goriot, Grandet, Baron Hulot and Balthazar Claes are monomaniacs, comparable with Ben Jenson's characters of humour rather than life-like characters as in the novels of Jane Austen or George Eliot. They are obsessed with one passion such as fatherhood, greed, sex or the search of the "absolute", and that to the exclusion of every other passion. But Sainte-Beuve cannot be blamed for taking Balzac's claim to the "Secretary to French Society" seriously. After all no less a critic than Friedrich Engels accepted this claim.<sup>32</sup>

In conclusion I would like to sum up my estimate of Sainte-Beuve's achievement as a critic by saying that Sainte-Beuve's evaluation of the sixteenth and seventeenth century writers of France, especially Montaigne, Corneille,

Racine and Moliere, is remarkably acute, anticipating in many instances the estimate of the most authoritative critical judgments of the twentieth century. His criticism of the nineteenth century romantic writers such as Victor Hugo and Chateaubriand, and of Rousseau anticipates the modern view of these writers. The notable instances of his failure are his censure of Huudelaire and Stendhal, both of whom had to wait for a literary revolution to get their due. For students of English literature, his appreciation of Shakespeare is remarkably sensitive and of Pope exceptionally just.

- 1 Steegmuller & Guter      *inte-Beuve Selected Essays* (Methuen, 1965).
- 2 Harold Nicolson, *Sainte-Beuve* (Constable, London, 1957).
- 3 A.G. Lehman, *Sainte-Beuve, Portrait of a Critic 1804-1842* (Oxford, 1962).
- 4 Martin Turnell, "Literary Criticism in France", *Scrutiny*, VIII, 2 (Sept, 1939), 177 & 182.
- 5 W.K. Wimsatt & Cleanth Brooks, *Literary Criticism*. Originally published by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1957. Reprinted by Oxford and IBH Publishing Co., Calcutta, 1964.
- 6 Rene Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950* (Jonathan Cape, London, 1970), III, 70-71.  
Extracted from "Chateaubriand jugi". See Steegmuller & Guterman, pp. 283-
- 8 *English Portraits* (Henry Holt & Co., N.Y., 1875). Translator's name not given.
- 9 See *Essays by Sainte-Beuve*, trans. Elizabeth Lee (London, 1892), p. 250. All subsequent quotations from this review are from this book.
- 10 "The Study of Poetry" in *Essays in Criticism*, 2nd Series (Macmillan, London, 1954), p. 24. The lines compared are :  
    To Hounslow Heath I point, and Banstead Down,  
    Thence comes your mutton, and these chicks my own.  
and  
    Absent thee from felicity awhile ...
- 11 *Essays by Sainte-Beuve*, trans. Elizabeth Lee, p. 256.
- 12 *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950*, III, 70.
- 13 See Steegmuller & Guterman, p. 32.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 76.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 43.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 108.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 261.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 200.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 269.
- 20 Henry James, *Literary Reviews and Essays*, ed. A. Mordell (College and University Press, New Haven, 1957), p. 157.
- 21 See Steegmuller & Guterman, pp. 222ff.
- 22 See V. Brombert, "Introduction", *Stendhal : A Collection of Critical Essays* (Prenti Hall, Calif., 1962), p. 4. .
- 23 Quoted by Brombert, *Ibid.*, p. 25.

- 24 See Steegmuller & Guterman, p. 276.
- 25 *The Penguin Book of French Verse*, 3, Nineteenth Century, ed. A. Hartley, 1955, p. 86.
- 26 Compare Arnold's censure of Byron for "ining after the unli", *Essays in Criticism*, p. 109.
- 27 See E. Lee's translation, pp. 259-60n.
- 28 See Steegmuller & Guterman, p. 256.
- 29 *Ibid.*, pp. 241ff.
- 30 Cf. Henry James, "Honoré de Balzac", *French Poets and Novelists* (Grosset and Dunlap, N.Y., 1964), p. 74. "The things he invented were as r l to him as the things he knew." James intended this as praise.
- 31 See *Honore de Balzac* (Macmillan, N.Y., 1964).
- 32 Quoted in F.W.J. Hemmings, *Balzac* (Random House, N.Y.,

‘এপিস্টলাই হেরইকুম’ ও ‘বীরাজনা কাব্য’ : অভিঘাত ও উদ্ভরণ

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এক সূৰ্য থেকে অস্ত সূৰ্যে পৌঁছবে আমার লেখনী, প্রাচী হবে আমার পশ্চিমা বাকের  
প্রোতা, মহাপাগরের পরপারে আবহাঙ্গরে আমার বাদী রপিত হবে কালান্ত্রে।

অভিঘাত ও তার ধরূপ

সাহিত্যের মূলে যেমন আছে মাহুয়ের চিরন্তন সৌন্দর্যবোধ, তেমনি তার ফলশ্রুতি বিশ্বয়ের  
জাগরণে। প্রকাশকুষ্ঠ বিশ্বয় নয়, কোনো শিল্পীর মনে যখন ভিন্ন সাহিত্যকর্মের সংস্পর্শে  
আগ্নিরিত বিশ্বয় রূপায়িত হয় সৃষ্টিতে, সাহিত্যের বিচারে তখনই অভিঘাতের প্রাণ ওঠে।  
সেক্ষেত্রে অন্তস্ত শিল্প কর্মের মতো সাহিত্যেও তাই দুই পক্ষ, এবং এই দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্কের  
ভিত্তির ওপরই নির্ভর করে অভিঘাতের স্বরূপ।

স্বীকৃতভাবে সাহিত্যে অভিঘাতের সৃজনশীল মাধ্যম তিনটি : অহুবাদ, অহুবর্তন  
ও অহুসৃষ্টি। এগুলির মধ্যে সংখ্যায় অস্তগুলিকে ছাপিয়ে গেলেও, অহুবাদ বিস্তৃত সাহিত্য-  
গণনা নয়। তার গভীরে আছে এক স্থপতি উদ্দেশ্য-প্রবণতা : তা জানের প্রসারই হোক,  
অথবা হোক প্রিয় লেখকের প্রচার বা মৌলিক কাব্যরচনার প্রকৃতি অথবা স্বভাবী সমাজের  
চিহ্নায়ণ। কিন্তু বিবস্ত অহুবাদক তাঁর সগোত্রীয় সাহিত্যকর্মীদের মধ্যে সবচাইতে  
আত্মবিলোপী ব্যক্তিত্ব। মূলের প্রতি তাঁর অভিনিবেশ নয়, বরং দু-একটি খলিত  
শব্দবাদের কচিং দৃষ্টান্ত থেকেই পাঠকের কাছে স্পষ্ট হ’তে পারে অহুবাদকের পক্ষপাত ও  
তাঁর অহুবাদের উদ্দেশ্য।

অহুসৃষ্টিতে মূল রচনা ও লেখক থাকেন নেপথ্যে। তাঁর রচনা অস্ত লেখকের মনে  
যে-প্রবর্তনা আগায়, তারই রূপায়ণ অহুসৃষ্টি – তার গৌরব মৌলিক রচনার সমপর্দায়ের।  
এ-প্রকার রচনার প্রধান হ’লো বীমের ব্যবহার – কখনও আজিকেরও। সে-ব্যবহার  
কখনও হ’তে পারে মূলের সমান্তর, কখনও-বা অহুসৃষ্টা নিতে পারেন সম্পূর্ণ প্রতিস্পর্শী পৃথ।  
বস্তুত বীমের ব্যবহারে এই প্রতিস্পর্শিতাই আধুনিক বহু লেখককে অহুসৃষ্টিতে প্রাণিত

প্রকাশের সুযোগ গ্রহণ করতে পারেন অমৃশ্রষ্টা। অধিকাংশ ক্ষেত্রে এই ধীরের আশ্রয়  
আমিভূত সেইসব কাহিনী যার মধ্য দিয়ে প্রকাশ পেতে পারে কল্পনার প্রাতিষিকতা।  
বিজ্ঞাতীয় সাংস্কৃতিক উত্তরাধিকারের ক্ষেত্রে অমৃশ্রষ্টার প্রধান দায়িত্ব তাঁর ঐতিহ্যে অমৃরূপ  
আমিভূত প্রত্যয়ের আবিষ্কার।

অমৃবাদ ও অমৃশ্রষ্টার মধ্যপন্থা হ'লো অমৃবর্তন। অমৃবাদকের মূল্যগ্রহণ বা  
অমৃশ্রষ্টার মৌলিকতা - এ দুয়ের কোনোটিই তাঁর অভীষ্ট নয়, অথবা বলা যায়, এর  
কোনোটিকেই অমৃবর্তী সম্পূর্ণ বর্জন ক'রে চলতে পারেন না। অমৃবর্তনের সঙ্গে মূলের  
সম্পর্ক তাই অত্যন্ত শিথিল। তাঁর প্রধান লক্ষ্য মূল রচনার মুগ্ধশের আড়ালে নিজস্ব  
বক্তব্য বিশদ করা। সে-প্রয়োজনে অপ্রাসঙ্গিক বা সরলীকৃত কোনো অভিযোজনেও তাঁর  
আপত্তি থাকে না। অমৃবাদকের বিনয় বা অমৃশ্রষ্টার গ্রন্থিতির অভাবে তাঁদের সাহিত্যকর্ম  
কখনও ভেঙে পড়ে অমৃবর্তনে।

বাঙলা সাহিত্যে অন্তিমবাদের সন্থা

খ্রীষ্টীয় পঞ্চদশ-ষোড়শ শতাব্দী থেকে পূর্ব গোলাধর্মে পাশ্চাত্য শক্তিগুলির সমুদ্রযাত্রা ও তার  
অনিবার্য পরিণতিরূপে সাম্রাজ্যবাদের সূচনা উপনিবেশগুলির সাংস্কৃতিক জীবনে একদিকে  
যেমন নতুন স্রষ্টার প্রাবল্য এনেছিলো, অন্যদিকে তেমনই স্বজাতীয় ঐতিহ্যের সঙ্গে তাদের  
মানসিক দূরত্বেরও সৃষ্টি করেছিলো। বাঙলা সাহিত্যে ঈশ্বর গুপ্তে ঐতিহাসিক পূর্বসূচনা  
দেখা গেলেও, মধুসূদনের রচনাতেই প্রথম স্পষ্ট হ'লো এই স্বেচ্ছাবৃত্ত অপসরণের চিহ্ন।  
কিন্তু স্বাভাবিকভাবেই যখন মধুসূদনের উত্তরাধিকার বাঙলা কাব্যে স্বীকৃত, ঐতিহ্যগত  
অন্তরায়ের প্রশ্ন তখন অবাস্তব হ'য়ে গেলো - সম্পূর্ণ উপপাত্তটাই গেলো পালটে। ১৮৭৬  
খ্রিষ্টাব্দে মধুসূদনের সহপাঠী রাজনারায়ণ বসু লিখেছিলেন: 'জাতীয় ভাব বোধ হয়  
মাইকেল মধুসূদনেতে যেমন অল্প পরিলক্ষিত হয়, অন্য কোন বাঙালী কবিতে সেরূপ হয় না।  
তিনি তাঁহার কবিতাকে হিন্দু পরিচ্ছদ দিয়াছেন বটে, কিন্তু সেই হিন্দু পরিচ্ছদের নিয়  
হইতে কোট পাতুলন দেখা দেয়।' ১৯২৯ খ্রিষ্টাব্দে মোহিতলাল মজুমদার লিখেছেন:  
'আয়োজনের ক্রটি ছিল না, - ছন্দ, ভাষা, ঘটনা-কাহিনী, হোমার-মিল্টনের ভঙ্গি,  
দাণ্ডে-ভাল্লিলের কল্পনা এবং সর্কোপরি বিদেশী কাব্যের প্রাণবন্ত - এমন কি বাস্ক-বাস্ক;  
পঞ্চাশ আশ্রয় কবিবার প্রতিভা - সবই ছিল; কিন্তু কবি, সত্যকার কবি বলিগা,  
স্রষ্টার মতো অমোঘ নিয়মের বশবর্তী হইয়া যাহা রচনা করিলেন - তাহা মহাকাব্যের  
আকারে বাঙ্গালী-জীবনের গীতিকাব্য।...সমুদ্রতলে কপোতাক্ষের অন্তঃস্রোত তাঁহার  
কাব্য-তরলীর গতি নির্দেশ করিল, সমুদ্র পাড়ি দেওয়া আর হইল না। তরী যখন তীরে  
আসিয়া লাগিল, তখন দেখা গেল, - "সেই ঘাটে থেয়া দেয় ঈশ্বরী পাটুনি।" ২২ মাত্র ভিঙ্গার  
বন্দরের মধ্যে মতামতের ক্ষেত্রে এই মৌল্যবোধ বাধন একদিকে যেমন বাঙলা সাহিত্যের  
বীকরণকমতা প্রমাণ করে, অন্যদিকে তেমনই প্রমাণ করে সাহিত্যে অভিযোজ-

**সমস্যা**—এমন-কি ভিন্ন সাংস্কৃতিক পরিমণ্ডলেও—সময়ের বাধ্য, বিশেষ ক’রে বর্তমান আন্তর্জাতিকতার যুগে ও অহুস্থির ক্ষেত্রে।

কিন্তু অত্যাশ্চর্য ঐগনিবেশিক দেশগুলোর তুলনায় বাঙলা সাহিত্যে সার্থক অহুস্থির প্রাধান্য অন্তরায় উনবিংশ শতাব্দীতে সম্পূর্ণ ভিন্ন, প্রায় বিপরীত, জীবনদর্শনের সঙ্গে বাঙালীর পরিচয়ের আকস্মিকতায়। এ-তথ্য আজ অস্বীকার করার উপায় নেই যে, আধুনিক বাঙলা সাহিত্যের শ্রেষ্ঠ ফসলের জন্ম এই পশ্চাত্য কৃষ্টির সর্গক্ষেত্রে। সে-আকর্ষণ লক্ষ্যে, এবং প্রকারান্তরে তারই ছনিবারতায়, আগ পুরাণের সঙ্গে আমাদের নতুন পরিচয় হয়েছে সত্য, কিন্তু লৌকিক বিশ্বাসের সঙ্গে তার আত্মার দূরত্ব বিস্তর; এই সমস্যা নেই কানাডা অথবা অস্ট্রেলিয়ার সাহিত্যে। ঐগনিবেশিক ইংরেজ ও তাদের দেশীয় সাহিত্যের সঙ্গে মিশ্র। তত্বপরি, নগরকেন্দ্রিক বাঙলা সাহিত্যের নাগরিক লেখকেরা দতো ক্ষুণ্ণ আন্তর্জাতিকতার মুক্তি খুঁজেছেন, গ্রামবাসী বৃহত্তর লোকজীবনের সঙ্গে তাঁদের সম্পর্ক ততোচিত্তি শিথিল হ’তে শুরু করেছে। সাংস্কৃতিক বিধার এই হ্রস্বনাশই মধুসূদনের প্রতিবার উদ্বেগবাল।

এই সাংস্কৃতিক বিভাজনের সমস্যা বিষয়ে মধুসূদন অসংজ্ঞাত ছিলেন না। ‘কমলময়ী নাটক’ প্রসঙ্গে বন্ধুদের দ্বারা শেক্সপীরীয় মানদণ্ডে তাঁর নাট্যবিচারের প্রয়াস লক্ষ্য ক’রে মধুসূদন লিখেছেন: ‘They perhaps forget that I write under very different circumstances. Our social and moral developments are of a different character. We are no doubt actuated by the same passions, but in us those passions assume a milder shape.’<sup>১৩</sup> এরও কিছুকাল পূর্বে, ১৮৬০ খ্রিষ্টাব্দের শেষের দিকে ‘মেঘনাদবধ কাব্য’র প্রথম সর্গ সমাপ্ত ক’রে একটি চিঠিতে নব্বের উদ্দেশ্য প্রসঙ্গে মধুসূদন লিখেছিলেন: ‘It is my ambition to engraft the exquisite graces of the Greek mythology on our own; ...you shan’t have complain again of the un-Hindu character of the poem. I shall not borrow Greek stories but write, rather try to write, as a Greek would have done.’<sup>১৪</sup> শুধু তা-ই নয়, বিদেশী সাহিত্য থেকে অহুগ্রহণের মাত্রা মধুসূদন মধুসূদনের মজাগ দৃষ্টি ছিলো। পশ্চাত্য সাহিত্য থেকে সমূল কাহিনীর প্রতিরোপ নয়, তাঁর ঐঙ্গিত ছিলো বাঙলা সাহিত্যে প্রতিষ্ঠা দৃষ্টিকোণের প্রবর্তন।

ত মেই উদ্দেশ্যে, কখনও কৈশোরক মুক্ততায়, মধুসূদন তাঁর বিপুল পাঠলভ্য ঐগ্নি বাণচাষের লোকসংবরণ করতে পারেননি। একটি চিঠিতে তিনি স্পষ্টতই লিখেছেন: ‘In matters literary, old boy, I am too proud to stand before the world, in borrowed clothes I may borrow a neck tie, or even a waist-coat, but not the whole suit.’<sup>১৫</sup> এই সচেতনতার অন্তই তত্ত্ব জনগনের



নির্ণেণ মেনে মধুসূদন অমৃতপ্রসার ঈপ্সিত প্রতিভূলা ভাষারতন সন্ধানে নিবিষ্ট হয়েছিলেন, সে-সাধনার সাহিত্য-অমূল্যলীনই প্রধান, অমৃতর অমৃত্যুয়ান গৌণ। ৬

‘বীরাসনা কাব্য’ : অভিনাতের দৃশ্য

মধুসূদনের রচনাবলী পাঠ করলেই মেধা যাবে, পাশ্চাত্য সাহিত্যে তাঁর অমৃতগ্রহণ বক্তব্য নয়, প্রধানত বর্ণনায়, উপমাচরনে ও প্রকাশভঙ্গিতে সীমাবদ্ধ। এই নির্বাচন নিছক সমাপতন নয়, তাঁর সাহিত্যিক অভীষ্টেরই প্রতিফলন। তাঁর দৃষ্টভঙ্গি অবশ্যই প্রতীচী সাহিত্য-মাদর্শে উপন্নাত কিন্তু তাঁর পত্রাবলীর ঘোষণা যে অনে কটাই অতিরঞ্জিত, মধুসূদনের তন্মিত পাঠকমাত্রই সে-বিষয়ে একমত হবেন। ‘বীরাসনা কাব্য’ সে-ভুলনার অনেক মিতাভিলাষী ব’লে অথবা বক্তব্যের দিক থেকে গুঢ় অভিপ্রায়ী নয় ব’লেই হয়তো মধুসূদন তাঁর স্বভাবের ব্যতিক্রম হিশেবেই ‘বীরাসনা’ প্রসঙ্গে কিছু উনবাক। ৭

মাত্রাজ প্রবাসকালে বিভিন্ন ভাষার দৈনন্দিন অমূল্যলীনে লাভিনের জগৎ নির্দিষ্ট হয়েছিলো দুটি ঘণ্টা। ১৮৫৪ খ্রিষ্টাব্দে মাত্রাজ থেকে প্রকাশিত *The Anglo-Saxon and the Hindu* বক্তৃতায় মুরোপীয় কবিদের মধ্যে ওভিদের উল্লেখ ক’রে বলেছেন : ‘I have sighed over the sad strains of him, who in his cheerless exile, sang of the hapless and the absent lover.’ ৮ কিন্তু তিনি ভুলিল সম্ভবত মূল পড়লেও তাঁর পাঠ্য ‘কবিকুলগুরু’দের তালিকাও ওভিদ অমূল্যলীন। ১৮৬০ খ্রিষ্টাব্দে সমাধারী রাজনারায়ণকে তিনি অকপটে লিখেছেন : ‘As for me, I never read any poetry except that of Valmiki, Homer, Vyasa, Virgil, Kalidas, Dante (in translation), Tasso (Do), and Milton.’ ৯ পরবর্তীকালেও ওভিদ বিষয়ে মধুসূদনের বিশ্বকর নীরবতা থেকে মনে হয়, ‘বীরাসনা কাব্য’ রচনার প্রত্যক্ষ প্রেরণা, ওভিদের ‘এপিস্টলাই হেরোইডম’ (*Epistolae Heroïdum*) নয়, পোপের ‘Eloisa to Abelard’ এবং বায়রনের ‘Epistle to Augusta’ ও *Don Juan*-এর প্রথম সর্গে জুলিয়ার বিষায়পত্র। হিন্দু কলেজে *Selections from the British Poets*-এ সন্নিবিষ্ট এই কবিতাগুলি পড়ানোর স্বত্রে রিচার্ডসন তাঁর উজ্জল ছাত্র মধুসূদনকে ওভিদের এই পত্রকাব্য এবং ইংরেজিতে টাণ্ডারভিলের তর্জমা *The Heroicall Epistles* (১৮৬৭) এবং তাঁর অমৃত্যুয়ানী মাইকেল ড্রেটনের *England's Heroicall Epistles* (১৮২৭)-এর সন্ধান দিয়েছিলেন মনে করলে অমৃত্যুয় হবেন না। ‘বীরাসনা’য় পত্রের স্বচনায় কাহিনীর চূষক পরিবেষণের রীতি সম্ভবত তিনি গ্রহণ করেছিলেন এঁদেরই আদর্শে। উত্তরজীবনে লাভিন শেখার পরও মধুসূদন রোমের এই বিলাসকলাকুতূহল কবির প্রতি কতোটা আকৃষ্ট হ’তে পেরেছিলেন, তার কোনো অসংশয় প্রমাণ নেই। ‘বীরাসনা কাব্য’ পরিকল্পনার সঙ্গে ওভিদের সংযোগ তাই দৃষ্টব্য ও পরোক্ষ।

ওভির ও মধুসূদন

‘আর্স আমাতোরিয়া’র ওভির আত্মপরিচয় দিয়েছেন ‘প্রণয়ের প্রশিক্ষক’ বলে।<sup>১০</sup> পের্সেউস লাত্রোর কাছে কাব্যতত্ত্বের বৈদ্যকরণিক দৃষ্টান্তর তুলনায় রসতত্ত্বের দিকটিতেই তাঁর শিক্ষা পূর্ণতা পেয়েছিলো। ‘হেরইদ্দুম’-এ প্রণয়ের প্রসাধনকলার সঙ্গে যুক্ত হয়েছে এই কাব্যতত্ত্বের রত্নসিঁদুর। কামকলার সেই অভিজ্ঞতাই ওভির রচনায় মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দৃষ্টান্তবাদের স্বযোগে সমগ্র কাব্যে এক নাটকীয় ক্ষতি ও দীপ্তি সঞ্চার করেছে। ‘মেতামরফসেস’-এর মূল আকর্ষণ ঘনিষ্ঠ হয় কাহিনীমাহাত্ম্যে, ‘হেরইদ্দুম’-এর আকর্ষণ চরিত্রের প্রাণবন্ততায়। হুগনের এই উচ্ছল প্রাচুর্য, যা একদিন মধুসূদনকে বায়রনের ভক্ত করেছিলো, পরিণতিতে অনিবার্যভাবেই ওভির অহুসরণে আকৃষ্ট করলো। শুধু তাই নয়, গণতান্ত্রিক রোমে ঐপদী গ্রীক সাহিত্যের বাহ্য আড়ম্বরের যে-অহুসীল চলছিলো, আউগুস্তাস-এর শাসনকালীন স্থিতি ও নিরাপত্তায় একদিকে যেমন সেই চর্চায় মন্থণতা এলো, তেমনি ছন্দঃপদী আঙ্গিকের আড়ালে ব্যক্তির উদ্দামতা প্রকাশের পথ খুঁজে পেলো। অন্তর্দিকে ‘মেতামরফসেস’-এর যথাসাধ্য সংস্কারের পরে ‘ব্রজাঙ্গনা’র ওভির পরিমিত স্বাধীনতা সত্ত্বেও অতৃপ্ত মধুসূদন যেমন বেছে নিয়েছিলেন পত্রকাব্যের স্বেচ্ছাচার, তেমনি প্রমীলার দৃষ্টিকোণে ‘পতি-বিরহে কাতরা যুবতী’-মূর্তি, ‘ব্রজাঙ্গনা কাব্যে’ ভর্তাংসরহবিধুরা উন্মত্ত গোপিনী এবং ‘বীরাঙ্গনা’র কাম্য প্রণয়িনীতে রূপান্তরিত। ওভির কাব্যের পাত্র-পাত্রী যেমন প্রধানত হোমারের মহাকাব্যযুগ্মক ও গ্রীক নাট্যকাহিনী থেকে সমাহৃত, মধুসূদনের কাব্যের চরিত্রগুলিও তেমনি দুটি আর্ষ মহাকাব্য ও কালিদাসের নাট্যকাব্য থেকে সংগৃহীত, যদিও উভয় কবিই অনেক অহুস্রের পূরণ ঘটিয়েছেন মৌলিক বহনকার সহায়তায়। সে-ক্ষেত্রে তাঁদের প্রধান অবলম্বন পুরাণ।

‘এগিস্তলাই হেরইদ্দুম’ ও ‘বীরাঙ্গনা কাব্য’

পোপ-বায়রনের মধ্যস্থতায় ওভির রচনার সঙ্গে মধুসূদনের পরিচয় হয়। ভারতীয় তথা বাঙলা সাহিত্যের স্বভাবধর্মের প্রতি বিশ্বস্ত থেকেও কীভাবে এই প্রতীচ্য কাব্যের ঐশ্বর্য মাতৃভাষায় ব্যবহৃত হ’তে পারে, ‘বীরাঙ্গনা কাব্যে’ মধুসূদনের সামনে সেটাই ছিলো প্রধান সমস্যা। তাঁর মতো আত্মাভিমানী পুরুষের পক্ষে অসম্ভব ছিলো অহুস্রাবকের আত্মসমর্পণ। একদিকে মৌলিক কবিস্বভাব তাঁকে উদ্বোধিত করেছিলো প্রতিভুল্য এক বীরাঙ্গনা সমাবেশে আবিষ্কারে। এই চুই অহুস্র প্রতিক্রিয়ার ফলেই মধুসূদন বেছে নিয়েছিলেন অহুস্রার মাধ্যম।

ওভির মতো মধুসূদনেরও অভিপ্রেত ছিলো একুশটি পত্ররচনা। গ্রন্থাকারে প্রকাশিত এগারোটি ও আরও পাঁচটির পর তিনিও হয়তো বেছে নিতেন তিন যুগল প্রণয়ী পত্রাবিনিময়—কিন্তু এসবই অভিধাত প্রমাণের ভুল বহনতা। পংক্তিবিচার দ’য়ে

নিরূপিত প্রলাবণ্য একান্ত বহিরাঙ্গীন। পক্ষান্তরে ‘বীরাদনা’র আমরা অহুস্টির সেই উভয় পন্থাই সন্ধান পাবো—কোথাও কবি সমান্তর কাহিনী আবিষ্কারে তৎপর, কোথাও-বা তিনি রচনা করতে চান সম্পূর্ণ প্রতিস্পর্ধী এক প্রতিমা।

‘বীরাদনা’র এগারোটি পত্রের মধ্যে অন্তত সাতটি পত্রে মধুসূদন পার্শ্বত ‘হেরইছুম্’-এর কাহিনীগত সমান্তর খুঁজে পেয়েছিলেন প্রাচীন ভারতীয় সাহিত্যে। পেনেলোপে যেমন যুলিসিস্কে, ভাঙ্গমতীও তেমনি দুর্ধোধনকে যুদ্ধ থেকে ফিরে আসার জ্ঞাত অহুসয় করেছেন। ‘হেরইছুম্’-এর একাধিক পত্রে আগন্তুক প্রণয়ীর প্রতারণায় অহুযোগ করেছেন বকিতারা। সেই ফিলিস্ হিপসিপিলে-দিদো-আরিয়াদনের মতো শকুন্তলা-পত্রিকারও বিষয়বস্তু প্রত্যাখ্যাত প্রণয়িনীর অহুযোগ। গুরুগম্ভীর তারার চিঠির প্রতিভুলনা সপত্নী পুত্রের কাছে ফাইজার প্রেমভিক্ষা। উর্বশীর প্রণয় নিবেদনের সূত্র আছে কেওনের প্রতি সাক্ষ্যের পত্রে; অরেস্তেসের কাছে বাগ্‌দত্তা হারমিওনের সমস্তার সঙ্গে ক্লিগীর সমস্তা অভিন্ন। তৃতীয় পাণ্ডবের বিরহে দ্রৌপদী দে-সংশয়ের বিধে জর্জরিত। দেইয়ানিরার যন্ত্রণার সঙ্গে তার প্রভেদ শুধু মাত্রায়। স্বামীর অমঙ্গলচিন্তায় লাগামিয়া যেভাবে প্রতেসিলাউগকে সতর্ক করেছে, ঠিক তেমনি ক’রেই উদ্বিগ্ন দুঃশলা জয়ত্রথকে যুদ্ধে নিবৃত্ত হ’তে অহুরোধ করেছে। মানসিকতার দিক থেকে কেকয়ী ও জনার চরিত্রে যেমন দ্রী ও মাতার সম্পর্কে বিরোধ বেধেছে, তেমনি দ্রুতা ও দ্রীর সত্তা দ্বিগুণিত কেনেন ও হিপেরয়েস্তার চরিত্রে। বিধবা হৃর্ণপথার পত্রের মূলে আকিলিসের প্রতি ভর্ৎসন। ত্রিসেইস-এর পত্রের অহুভাব বটবল্লনা নয়। কারণ ভিন্নতর হ’লেও, ঈনোনে ও কেকয়ীর স্বামীর প্রতি বিরাগ একই শ্রেণীর। কাহিনী তথা পরিহিত্তির সাধারণ্যহুত্রে ওভিদ ও মধুসূদনের নায়িকারা যেমন তুলনীয়, তেমনি সকারীভাবে সাযুজ্যেও বটে।

অত্‌দিকে ওভিদের তিনটি পত্রের কোনো-কোনো বৈশিষ্ট্য আশ্চর্য্য করনের কেনেন্স যেদেয়া ও হিপেরয়েস্তার অহুরূপ কাহিনী মধুসূদন তাঁর কাব্যে ব্যবহার করেননি—হুয়তো দেশীয় আবহাওয়ায় এ-জাতীয় চরিত্রের বিখ্যাত প্রতিরূপায়ণ সম্ভবপর নয় ব’লেই।<sup>১১</sup> অহুরূপভাবে মধুসূদনের জাহ্নবী বা জনার কোনো তুলনা খুঁজে পাওয়া যাবে না ওভিদের কাব্যে। অবয়বগত সাক্ষ্য ছাড়া এই পত্রিকা লির কাহিনীচর্যনকে তাই নিরহুত্‌ভাবেই মৌলিক বলা চলে।

‘হেরইছুম্’-এর নায়িকাদের মধ্যে অধিকাংশই স্বামী বা প্রণয়ী পরিত্যক্ত। এবং এই বার্থ প্রণয়ের যন্ত্রণা থেকেই ওভিদ তাঁর পত্রকাব্যগুলির নাট্যমূহূর্ত চর্যন ক’রে নিয়েছেন। তাঁর খণ্ডিতা নায়িকারা কখনও প্রত্যাগমনের আস্থান জানিয়েছে, স্বত্তির ঝাঁপি খুলে কখনও স্রবণ করেছে স্বত্থের অতীত। কিন্তু বেশির ভাগ ক্ষেত্রেই প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বী প্রণয়িনীর প্রতি টধাবশে বা প্রণয়ীর অহুতজ্ঞতায় অ’লে ওঠে প্রতিশোধ স্খায়্য সবশেষে আশ্বহননের সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়ে প্রেমের অহুে তারা জরী হ’তে চায়। তাদের প্রেমের প্রধান ঐশ্বর্য

আত্মপ্রতিষ্ঠার। আর আত্মসমর্পণের মাধ্যমেই মধুসূদনের নায়িকারা প্রেমস্নী। ওভিদের নায়িকারা প্রণয়ের সংগ্রামে বীরাঙ্গনা, মধুসূদনের নায়িকারা প্রেমের সাধনে। এই নিবেদনের ক্ষণটিই বীরাঙ্গনা’র ভুঙ্গ মুহূর্ত। এইখানেই মধুসূদনের কাব্যের প্রতিস্পর্ধিতা।

নারীর এবং সেই সূত্রে প্রেমের এই ষিধারূপ নিছক প্রাচ্য-প্রতীচ্য স্বভাবধর্মের ভিন্নতায় অহুসঙ্কেত নয়। মেদেয়ার পাশে হিপেরক্লেশ্চার মতো দেবযানীর পাশে শর্মিষ্ঠার বৈপরীত্য যে প্রথম থেকেই মধুসূদনের মন ঝড়িকার করেছিলো এবং সেক্ষেত্রেও তাঁর পক্ষপাত যে স্পষ্ট তার প্রমাণ আছে ‘শর্মিষ্ঠা’ নাটকেই। অতিরিক্ত, মধুসূদন শ্রিয়্যার দেবীরূপ এঁকেছেন। শ্রী-বী-পত্রিকার – যদিও কাব্যগৌরবে ‘বীরাঙ্গনা’র সেটি দুর্বলতম। কিন্তু স্পষ্টই বোঝা যায়, মহাকাব্যের পেকে ক্রমাগত তিনি আকৃষ্ট হচ্ছেন চরিত্রের গহন অন্তরে – হয়তো বাঙলার ঐক্য সাহিত্যসৃষ্টির বার্থতার কথা ভেবেই গ্রহণ করছেন গীতিকাব্যের উপযোগী বিষয়বস্তু। অতীতক যুরোপীয় সাহিত্যে রমণীর প্রেমের ভীততা পূরণ করেছেন ভারতীয় নারীর কল্যাণমুখির বৈচিত্র্যে।

উদ্যম আবেগ ও নাটকীয় সংঘাতের বীজ মধুসূদনের ব্যক্তিগত জীবনে ছিলো। ব’লেই কবিজীবনের উন্মেষপর্বে তিনি মনের মিল খুঁজে পেয়েছিলেন বায়রনের কাব্যে। শুধু তা-ই নয়, সেই আত্ম-প্রতিভাস আবিষ্কারের সমুদ্র উপার্জন উত্তরকালেও তাঁকে উদ্বোধিত করেছিলো। আগেই বলেছি, ওভিড বিষয়ে মধুসূদনের উৎসাহের অস্বাভাবিক সম্ভাব্য মাধ্যম বায়রনের জুলিয়াস পত্র। ওভিদের নায়িকাদের আহত প্রেমাভিমানের নিবৃত্তি প্রতিশোধে। বিচ্ছেদ তাদের শুধু কারিকাই নয় মানসিকও, তাই অসেতুবদ্ধ। তাদের যন্ত্রণা রিভিতার। কিন্তু বায়রনের জুলিয়াস দে-রিক্তার ছোঁয়া লাগেনি কোথাও। বকনা সবেও তাই তার প্রেমে এক অনির্বচনীয় পূর্ণতা লক্ষ করা যায়। বিচ্ছেদের মধ্যেও প্রেমের স্বভিসৌরভ নিয়েই সে তৃপ্ত – তা-ই তার অন্তিমের প্রমাণ এবং সেই চূড়ান্ত উপলব্ধির মুহূর্তেই সে নতুন করে ঠাঁতে শেখে: ‘I had not lived till now’। মধুসূদনের সমগ্র কাব্যেও তেমনি বিচ্ছেদের মধ্যেও ছড়িয়ে আছে আগম মিলনের মধুর আশাস – যার অস্ত নাম জীবন। রেনেসাঁস-পূর্ব ও -উত্তরকালের দুই কবির জীবনদৃষ্টির ভিন্নতা – অথবা পরিপূরকতা সেখানেই।

১ ‘বীরাঙ্গনা ভাষা ও সাহিত্য বিষয়ক বক্তৃতা’ (কলকাতা, গ্রন্থন, ১৯৭৩), পৃ ২০-২৪

২ ‘আধুনিক বাংলা সাহিত্য’ (কলকাতা, জেনারেল প্রিন্টার্স, ১৩৪০), পৃ ৫০৩

৩ যোগেন্দ্রনাথ বসু, ‘মাইকেল মধুসূদন দত্তের জীবন-চরিত্র’ (কলকাতা, সাত্তাল এণ্ড কোম্পানি, ১৯০৫), পৃ ৪৩০-২১

৪ তদেব, পৃ ৩২৭

৫ তদেব, পৃ ২৩২

৬ শ্রী শিশিরকুমার দাশ ও ড ক্ষেত্র গুপ্ত সমকালীন নারীমুক্তি আন্দোলনের প্রেক্ষিতে 'বীরাজনা কাব্য' 'বিভাগসংস্কার' নামে উৎসর্গিত হবার গৃঢ় তাৎপর্য খুঁজে পেয়েছেন। [ অ যথাক্রমে 'মধুসূদনের কবিমানস' (কলকাতা, বুকলাও প্রা. লি., তারিখহীন), পৃ ৫৪ ও 'মধুসূদনের কবি-আত্মা ও কাব্যশিল্প' (কলকাতা, এ. কে. সরকার এণ্ড কোং, ১৩৬৮), পৃ ২৫১। ] কিন্তু 'বীরাজনা'র উল্লেখ সম্বন্ধিত ছাতি চিঠিতেই বিভাগসংস্কার প্রসঙ্গে মধুসূদনের উৎসাহ প্রকাশ পেয়েছে বিশেষভাবে নবীন কবিতার প্রতি তাঁর সহানুভূতি ও আগ্রহের জগা। পত্রাবলীর সাক্ষ্য অব্যাহত না-করলে মানতেই হয়, 'বীরাজনা কাব্য' 'convert to the new poetical creed' 'the great Vidyasagar'-কে উৎসর্গিত। [ অ যোগীন্দ্রনাথ বসু, প্রাগুক্ত, পৃ ৫২৫ ও ৫২৭ ]

ষট্চরারিংশ ও সপ্তচরারিংশ পত্র। অ যোগীন্দ্রনাথ বসু, তদেব, পৃ ৫২৪-২৭

৮ ড ক্ষেত্র গুপ্ত স. মধুসূদন রচনাবলী (কলকাতা, সাহিত্য সংসদ, ১৩৬৫), পৃ ৫০২। মূল পুস্তিকার পাদটীকায় এটি গোমার প্রসঙ্গে নির্দেশিত। উল্লেখে ভুল স্বীকার করেও সম্পাদক সেটি শুধরে দেননি।

৮ খ্রিষ্টাব্দে নির্বাসিত হবার বহু আগেই আত্মমানিক ২২-১৫ খ্রিষ্টপূর্বাব্দে 'এপিষ্টলাই হেরাইডুম্' রচিত হয়েছিলো, নিরানন্দ নির্বাসনে নয়।

৯ যোগীন্দ্রনাথ বসু, তদেব, পৃ ৩২২

'ego sum praeceptor amoris' I. 17

'কৃষ্ণকুমারী নাটক' প্রসঙ্গে কেশবচন্দ্র গঙ্গোপাধ্যায়কে মধুসূদন একটি চিঠিতে লিখেছেন : 'The position of European females, both dramatically as well as socially, are very different. It would shock the audience if I were to introduce a female (a virtuous one) discoursing with a man, unless that man be her husband, brother or father. This describes a circle around me, beyond the boundary line of which I cannot step.' [ অ যোগীন্দ্রনাথ বসু, তদেব, পৃ ৩৬০ ]

## বাঙলা রূপান্তরে মলিয়ের

মলিয়ের-এর সঙ্গে আমাদের পরিচয় হয়তো প্রধানত ইংরেজি ভাষার মাধ্যমে, কিন্তু ইংরেজের সহায়তায় নয়। সেকালের সাহিত্যের পাঠ্যতালিকায় মলিয়ের-এর নাম থাকা সম্ভব নয়। ফরাশি নাট্যকারদের মধ্যে মলিয়ের বিশেষভাবে ইংরেজদের প্রিয় হ'লেও এদেশের বিদ্যালয়গুলিতে ফরাশি সাহিত্য পঠন-পাঠনের ব্যবস্থা ছিলো না। সেযুগের কলকাতার বিদেশী রঙ্গালয়গুলিতে অভিনীত নাটকের তালিকায় মলিয়ের-এর কোনো নাটক নেই অথবা পরবর্তীকালের ভ্রাম্যমাণ নাট্যাগোষ্ঠীর কেউ মলিয়ের মঞ্চস্থ করেছেন ব'লেও গুনি নি। তুলনায় শেক্সপিয়র ক্রাসঘর, রঙ্গমঞ্চ, সাহিত্য-আলোচনা, আবৃত্তি-প্রতিযোগিতা ইত্যাদি সর্বক্ষেত্রে বিরাজ করছেন। আমাদের দেশে শেক্সপিয়র জনপ্রিয় হয়েছিলেন প্রধানত ক্রাসঘর থেকে। এছাড়াও ইংরেজদের প্রতিষ্ঠিত রঙ্গালয়ে বিভিন্ন সময়ে শেক্সপিয়রের নাটক অভিনীত হয়েছে এবং উনিশ শতকে দু-একজন বাঙালি অভিনেতাও সাহেবদের সঙ্গে অভিনয় ক'রে প্রশংসা পেয়েছেন। অধ্যাপকদের মধ্যেও ডি. এল. রিচার্ডসন-এর মতো দু-একজন ছিলেন, যাদের ক্রাসঘর থেকে রঙ্গমঞ্চ পর্যন্ত সমান গতিবিধি ছিলো। আমাদের নাট্যসাহিত্য এবং রঙ্গালয়ের ওপর শেক্সপিয়রের প্রভাব অনস্বীকার্য। গিরিশচন্দ্র থেকে উৎপল দত্ত পর্যন্ত সে-ধারা এখনও প্রবহমান। গিরিশচন্দ্র স্পষ্টই স্বীকার করেছিলেন, 'মহাকবি সেক্সপীরই আমার আদর্শ'। রবীন্দ্রনাথও অল্পকণ কথ্য বলেছেন, 'মালিনী' নাটকের সৃচনায়, 'শেক্সপীয়রের নাটক আমাদের কাছে বরাবর নাটকের আদর্শ'। আমাদের দেশে শেক্সপিয়রের বিপুল জনপ্রিয়তা এবং ব্যাপক প্রভাব সত্ত্বেও মানতে হবে যে, তিনি আমাদের আবিষ্কার নন। হয়তো সেই কারণেই আমাদের দেশে শেক্সপিয়রের প্রভাব যতোটা ব্যাপক ব'লে মনে হয় আসলে ততোটা গভীর নয়। রবীন্দ্রনাথের ভাষা ধার ক'রে বলা যায় যে এই জনপ্রিয়তার খাতের চেয়ে মাধবতা অনেক বেশি। যাকার মাধ্যমে শেক্সপিয়রকে প্রচারিত করবার জন্য উৎপল দত্ত স্বরগীয় প্রচেষ্টা অথবা তারো বহু আগে গিরিশচন্দ্র-রবীন্দ্রনাথের স্বীকৃতি সত্ত্বেও মান'তেই হয় শেক্সপিয়র শেষ পর্যন্ত দূরের বিশ্ব থেকে গেছেন। আমাদের দেশে এখনো শেক্সপিয়রচর্চার স্বতন্ত্র কোনো ঐতিহ্য নেই। এ-বিষয়ে কেতাবিচ্ছা প্রধানত ইংরেজ-গুরু নির্ভর। যে-রবীন্দ্রনাথ 'মালিনী' (১৮৯৬) নাটকের ভূমিকায় শেক্সপিয়রকে 'বরাবর নাটকের আদর্শ' বলেছিলেন, সেই রবীন্দ্রনাথই 'জীবনস্মৃতি'(১৯১২)-তে এসে

স্বীকার করলেন, ...আমরা বড়ের ডাকের নকল করিতে গিয়া নিজের প্রতি জবাবদত্তি করিয়া অতিশয়োক্তির দিকে যাইতেছিলাম।' পূর্বোক্ত গ্রন্থে তিনি কিছু পরে মন্তব্য করেছেন :

আমাদের মন শিশুকাল হইতে যুতুকাল পর্যন্ত কেবলমাত্র এই ইংরেজি সাহিত্যেই গড়িয়া উঠিতেছে।

ইংরেজদের সঙ্গে-সঙ্গে ইংরেজি ভাষাও বিদ্যায় নিলে শেক্সপিয়রের স্থান কী হ'তো তা আমরা সহজেই অহুমান করতে পারি। সেকালের পাঠ্যতালিকা তৈরি করতেন ইংরেজ অধ্যাপকেরা। আর এটা স্বাভাবিক যে তাঁদের নির্বাচিত গ্রন্থে শেক্সপিয়র বিশেষভাবে স্থান পাবেন। কিন্তু মলিয়ার কীভাবে এলেন? বাঙলা সাহিত্যে পাশ্চাত্য অভিধাতের পূর্ণাঙ্গ ইতিহাস এখনও রচিত হয়নি-হ'লে সংস্কৃতি-বিনিময়ের অনেক কৌতূহলগ্রন্থ তথা উদ্ঘাটিত হবে। আজ কল্পনা করতে মজা লাগে যে যদি ইংরেজদের জায়গায় ফরাসিরা সর্বভারতের প্রভু হতেন তাহ'লে শেক্সপিয়র-এর সঙ্গে কি আমাদের এমন নিবিড় পরিচয় হ'তো? তখন শেক্সপিয়র-এর জায়গায় কে বসতেন? - রাসিন? রাসিন বিষয়ে আমাদের ঐরাসীস্ত মধ্যে মনে হয় পরোক্ষভাবে ইংরেজের রুচি অনেকটা কাজ করেছে। আমাদের লেখকদের মধ্যে ফরাসি সাহিত্য ও সংস্কৃতির সঙ্গে যার পরিচয় খুবই ঘনিষ্ঠ ছিলো, সেই প্রথম চৌধুরীর একটি মন্তব্য এই প্রসঙ্গে উদ্ধৃত করা যেতে পারে :

ফরাসি জাতির ভিতর কোনো শেক্সপীয়র ভয়ায় নি ও জন্মাতো পারে না। পাগল প্রেমিক ও কবি যে এক জাত, এ কথা কোনো ফরাসি কবি বলেনও নি, স্বীকারও করেন নি।

এই মন্তব্যটি প্রথম চৌধুরীর বিখ্যাত প্রবন্ধ "ফরাসী সাহিত্যের বর্ণপরিচয়" (১৩২০) থেকে সংকলিত। ফরাসি সাহিত্য বিষয়ে প্রথম চৌধুরীর রুচিও কি ইংরেজ প্রভাবিত? ঐ প্রবন্ধে অনেকগুলি নামের সঙ্গে রাসিন একবারই শুধু উল্লিখিত হয়েছেন। এদিক দিয়ে আশ্চর্য ব্যক্তিক্রম জ্যোতিরিন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর। তিনি মলিয়ার দ্বারা অহুপ্রাণিত হবার আগেই রাসিন-এর নাটক দ্বারা প্রভাবিত হয়েছিলেন। তাঁর 'পুঙ্খবিক্রম' (১৮৭৯) নাটকের ওপর রাসিন-এর *Alexandre le Grand* এবং 'রোজিনী, বা চিত্তোর আক্রমণ নাটক' (১৮৭৫)-এর ওপর *Iphigénie en Aulide*-এর এতোটা প্রভাব দেখিয়েছেন মুনীর চৌধুরী যে এগুলিকে রূপান্তর বললেও চলে।<sup>১</sup> কিন্তু জ্যোতিরিন্দ্রনাথের সাহিত্য-ব্যক্তিত্বের সঙ্গে রাসিন-এর চেয়ে মলিয়ার-এর ভাবসাম্যতা অনেক বেশি। আজকের দিনে জ্যোতিরিন্দ্রনাথের খ্যাতি 'পুঙ্খবিক্রম' 'মদোজিনী', 'অশ্রুদীপ্ত' নাটকের লজ্জা ততোটা নয়, বরতোটা 'অলৌকবাবু', 'কিঞ্চিৎ জলবোণ' ইত্যাদি

নাটকের জন্ম। ঐতিহাসিকভাবে দেখলে লক্ষ্য করি যে জ্যোতিরিঙ্গনাথের উৎসাহ রাসিন থেকে মলিয়ার-এ স্থানান্তরিত হয়েছিলো। হয়তো যুগপরিবেশও এর জন্ম কতকটা দায়ী। প্রসঙ্গত অরুণীয় যে মলিয়ার-ও তাঁর নটজীবনের গোড়ায় রাসিন-এর নাটক দিয়ে শুরু করেছিলেন এবং তাঁর পরিচালিত নাট্যগোষ্ঠীই রাসিন-এর পূর্বোক্ত *Alexandre* নাটকটি প্রথম মঞ্চস্থ করেন। কিন্তু উক্ত নাটকের নিয়মিত অভিনয় চলাকালেই রাসিন মলিয়ারকে অভিনয়ের অসুযোগিতা প্রত্যাহার করেন।

লেবেডেক দুটি বিদেশী নাটকের বাঙলা তরজমা করেন। একটি হ'লো এম. জডয়েল প্রণীত 'দি ডিসগাইজ', অত্রটি 'লভ ইজ দি বেস্ট ডক্টর'। এর মধ্যে প্রথম নাটকটি 'কাল্পনিক সংবল' নামে রূপান্তরিত হ'য়ে একাধিকবার মঞ্চস্থ হয়েছিলো (প্রথম অভিনয় : ২৭ নভেম্বর ১৭৩৫ খ্রী; দ্বিতীয় অভিনয় ২১ মার্চ ১৭২৬ খ্রী)। কিন্তু দ্বিতীয় নাটকটি আরো অভিনীত হয়েছিলো কিনা জানা যায় না। এমন কি ঐ নাটকটির মূল লেখক কে সে-বিষয়েও অসুস্থ্যমানের ওপর নির্ভর করতে হয়। অনেকের মতে, 'লভ ইজ দি বেস্ট ডক্টর' আসলে মলিয়ার-এর বিখ্যাত গ্রন্থসনের বাঙলা তরজমা। কিন্তু এ-বিষয়ে নিশ্চিতভাবে কিছু বলা মুশকিল। যদি এটা সত্যি-সত্যি মলিয়ার-এর রচনা হয়, তবে অবশ্য মলিয়ার থেকে প্রথম বাঙলা অসুস্থ্যমানের কৃতিত্ব লেবেডেক-এর প্রাপ্য। কিন্তু নাটকটি কোনোদিন অভিনীত হয়নি, প্রকাশিতও হয়নি। সেজন্য লেবেডেক-এর এই তরজমার সঙ্গে পরবর্তী বাঙলা নাট্যকারদের মলিয়ার বিষয়ে উৎসাহের কোনো প্রত্যক্ষ যোগ নেই। জ্যোতিরিঙ্গনাথেরও তিন বছর আগে (১৮২১ খ্রী) মলিয়ার-এর একটি নাটক বাঙলায় রূপান্তরিত করেন রাজকৃষ্ণ দত্ত। তিনিও কীভাবে মলিয়ার-এর সঙ্গে পরিচিত হন আমরা জানি না। গ্রন্থসন রচনায় মলিয়ার যার আদর্শ ছিলো, সেই অমৃতলাল বিষয়ে শচীন্দ্রনাথ সেনগুপ্ত লিখেছেন :

অমৃতলাল মনে-প্রাণে ছিলেন খাঁটি বাঙালী। বাংলার সমাজের প্রতি, বাংলার পল্লীর প্রতি, তাঁর ছিল অকৃত্রিম অসুস্থ্যরাগ। অথচ মলিয়ারকে তিনি অত্যন্ত সার্থকতার সঙ্গে বাঙলায় রূপান্তরিত করেছিলেন। তিনি ফরাসী ভাষা জানতেন কিনা আমার জানা নেই। কিন্তু মূল মলিয়ার তাঁর লাইব্রেরী থেকে ফুটপাথে বিক্রয়ের জন্য এসেছিল, তা আমার চোখে পড়েছে।<sup>২</sup>

শচীন্দ্রনাথ পূর্বোক্ত বইয়েরই অগ্রজ গিরিশচন্দ্র সম্পর্কে মন্তব্য করেছেন :

তিনি নাটক লেখবার আগে ইবসেন (১৮৫০-১৮৯০) নাট্যজগৎকে তাঁর দানে সমৃদ্ধ করে অমৃতলাকে চলে গেছেন। কিন্তু ইংরেজের সঙ্গে



ছাড়া তখন বাঙলা নাট্যজগতের পরিচয় একমাত্র মল্লয়ার ছাড়া  
কায়র সাধেই হয় নি।<sup>৩</sup>

মধুসূদন কি মল্লয়ার-এর অম্বরগী ছিলেন? তাঁর চিঠিপত্রে অবশ্য এ-বিষয়ে কোনো উল্লেখ চোখে পড়েনি। তবে তাঁর 'বুড়ো শালিকের ঘাড়ে রোঁ'-র ওপর 'তারুঁ'-এর প্রভাব আছে ব'লে কেউ-কেউ মনে করেন। সৈয়দ মুহতবা আলীও লিখেছেন, "বুড়ো শালিকের ঘাড়ে রোঁ"-র মূলে মল্লয়ার। অথচ শৈলীতে গম্ভীর।<sup>৪</sup> যাই হোক, ভক্তপ্রসাদ চরিত্রটির সঙ্গে তারুঁ'-এর স্বভাবগত ঐক্য আছে, এবং দুটি নাটক নিয়ে যে চলুচলু কাণ্ড হয়েছিলো, তাতে বোঝা যায় সতেরো শতকের প্যারিস এবং উনিশ শতকের কলকাতার মধ্যে পরিবেশগত অনেক মিল ছিলো। ১৬৬৫ খ্রীষ্টাব্দের ১২ মে রাজা চতুর্দশ লুই-এর উপস্থিতি এবং পৃষ্ঠপোষকতায় মূল ফরান্সি নাটকটির প্রথম তিন অঙ্কের অভিনয় হয়, কিন্তু যাজ্ঞক সম্প্রদায় ও বক্ষণশীল সমাজের প্রতিবাদে নাটকটি নিষিদ্ধ হয়েছিলো। এই নিষেধাজ্ঞা মকুব হয় পাঁচ বছর পরে। মধুসূদনের গ্রহসনট যখন লেখা হয়, তখনও এদেশে নাট্যানিয়ন্ত্রণ আইন ব'লে কিছু ছিলো না। কিন্তু বেলগাছিয়ার নাট্যশালায় মধুসূদনের 'একেই কি বলে সভ্যতা' এবং 'বুড়ো শালিকের ঘাড়ে রোঁ'-র মহলা শুক ক'রেও শেষ পর্যন্ত বন্ধ ক'রে দিতে হয় প্রভাবশালী ব্যক্তিদের আপত্তিতে।

মধুসূদন এর পর আর কোনো গ্রহসন রচনা করেননি। তার কারণ পুরোপুরি আশাভঙ্গ নয়—গ্রহসন লেখার মেজাজই তাঁর চ'লে গিয়েছিলো। ১৮৬০ খ্রীষ্টাব্দের ২৪ এপ্রিল তারিখে রাজনারায়ণ বসুকে লেখা একটি চিঠিতে তিনি আক্ষেপ করছেন এই ব'লে যে গ্রহসন দুটি লেখার জন্ত তিনি অম্লতপ্ত। কেননা যেহেতু আমাদের কোনো জাতীয় থিয়েটার নেই, আমাদের রুচিকে নিয়ন্ত্রিত করার জন্ত নেই কোনো ক্লাসিকাল নাটক, সেজন্ত আমাদের গ্রহসন লেখা উচিত নয়।

মধুসূদনের এই আশঙ্কা যে মিথ্যে নয় তার প্রমাণ বাঙলা রঙ্গালয়ের পরবর্তী ইতিহাস। পৌরাণিক-ঐতিহাসিক-সামাজিক-গীতিনাট্যের চাহিদার উত্থান-পতন ঘটেছে, কিন্তু গ্রহসন মোটামুটি জনপ্রিয় ছিলো। তবে এই গ্রহসনগুলি কী জাতীয় তা যে-কোনো রঙ্গালয়ের ইতিহাস ঘাঁটলেই পাওয়া যাবে। অমৃতলাল বসু তাঁর স্মৃতিকথায় লিখেছেন :

এই গ্রহসন সাহিত্য অনেকটা আমাদের মুখে মুখে রচিত হইয়াছিল।  
অর্জুন্, গোবি, গোপাল দাস, মতি, নগেন, বেলবাবু ও আমি, সকলে  
মিলিয়া মুখে মুখে একখানা impromptu farce শৃঙ্খলাবদ্ধভাবে রচনা  
করিয়া ফেলিলাম।<sup>৫</sup>

পঞ্চরঙে জাতীয় নকশাই হোক আর 'হজুগে' গ্রহসনই হোক, সাধারণভাবে এগুলির প্রধান লক্ষ্য ছিলো ব্যক্তিগত আক্রমণ এবং চলন্ত উত্তেজনা। 'উঃ মোহান্তের এই কি কাজ'

অথবা ‘গজদানন্দ ও দুবরাজ’ জাতীয় গ্রহণনের ঐতিহাসিক তাৎপৰ্য্য যাই থাক, এগুলির জনপ্রিয়তা শেষ পর্যন্ত আমাদের নাট্য-সাহিত্যকে দুর্বল করেছে। আমাদের রঙ্গালয়ের দুর্ভাগ্য যে সাধারণ রঙ্গালয় প্রতিষ্ঠার এক বছরের মধ্যেই মধুসূদন-দীনবন্ধুর মৃত্যু হ’লো। সাময়িকতাকে অতিক্রম ক’রে সার্থক গ্রহণন রচনার মতো কেউ ছিলেন না। কিন্তু ক্রমশ দেখা গেলো অবস্থার কিছুটা পরিবর্তন ঘটেছে—জ্যোতিরিন্দ্রনাথ গ্রহণন লিখলেন, অমৃতলাল প্রবৃণ্ড *impromptu farce* ছেড়ে রীতিমত গ্রহণন রচনায় উৎসাহী হলেন। এবং এর পেছনে মলিয়ের-এর প্রভাব দুর্লভ্য নয়। প্রথম চৌধুরী পূর্বোক্ত প্রবন্ধে লিখেছেন :

...মোলিয়েরের নাটক ফরাসি প্রতিভার সর্বোচ্চ নিদর্শন। মোলিয়ের ধর্মের আবরণ খুলে পাপের, বিজ্ঞার আবরণ খুলে মূর্খতার, বীরত্বের আবরণ খুলে কাপুরুষতার, প্রেমের আবরণ খুলে স্বার্থপরতার মূর্তি পৃথিবীর লোকের চোখের স্রুক্ষে খাড়া করে দিয়েছেন। কিন্তু এসকল মূর্তি দেখে মাহুষের মনে ভয় হয় না, হাসি পায় মাহুষের ভিতর যা-কিছু লজ্জাকর আর হাস্যকর, তাই মোলিয়েরের চোখে পড়েছে, আর যা তাঁর চোখে ধরা পড়েছে তাই তিনি অপরের নিকট ধরিয়ে দিয়েছেন।

মলিয়ের সাময়িকতাকে অতিক্রম করতে পারেন ব’লেই তিনি সর্বজনীন, আর রামনারায়ণ তর্করত্ন পারেন না ব’লেই তাঁর নাটকগুলি শেষ পর্যন্ত ‘পর্বচ্ছিন্ন’ হয়ে থাকে মাজ। মলিয়ের-এর সঙ্গে আমাদের পরিচয় আকস্মিক ভাবে হ’লেও তিনি যে কতোটা জনপ্রিয় তা নিচের তালিকা থেকে বোঝা যাবে :

লেখক	অনূদিত / রূপান্তরিত নাটক	মূল নাটক	প্রকাশকাল
রাজকুমার দত্ত	‘যেমন রোগ তেমনি ঝোকা’	<i>Le Médecin malgré lui</i>	১২৮৮ বঙ্গাব্দ
জ্যোতিরিন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর	‘হঠাৎ নবাব’	<i>Le Bourgeois gentilhomme</i>	১৮৮৪ খ্রী
৩	‘পায়ে প’ড়ে দারগ্রহ’	<i>Le Mariage force’</i>	১৩০২ বঙ্গাব্দ
৪ অম্বা	‘গোঁবন্ধ’	<i>Le Médecin malgré lui</i>	—
৫ কালীচরণ মিত্র	‘অন্ন মধুর’		১২০১ খ্রী
৬ নগেন্দ্রনাথ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়	‘নিরুপায়ে চিকিৎসক’		১২০২ খ্রী
গিরিশচন্দ্র ঘোষ	‘যায়সা-কা-ভায়সা’ ( ২৫.১২.১২০৬-এ )	<i>our e’decin</i>	১২০৬ খ্রী
	‘মিনার্ভা’র অভিনীত )		

৮ অতুলকৃষ্ণ মিত্র	‘ভূফানী’ ( ৩ জ্যৈষ্ঠ, ১৩১৫ সালে ‘মিনার্ভা’র অভিনীত )	<i>L'E'tourdi</i>
”	‘প্রাণের টান’	<i>Le De'pit amoureux</i>
দাশরথি মুখোপাধ্যায়	‘সেলিনা’	<i>L'Avare</i>
নির্মলশিব বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়	‘মুখের মত’ ( ২৫ ফাল্গুন, ১৩২৫ সালে ‘ষ্টারে’ অভিনীত )	<i>George Dandin</i>
অবিনাশচন্দ্র গঙ্গোপাধ্যায়	‘ওলোট-পালোট’ ( ৯ পৌষ, ১৩২৬ ‘মনোমোহন থিয়েটারে’ অভিনীত )	<i>Le Mariage force'</i>
১৩ লোকনাথ ভট্টাচার্য	‘ভাতুর্ক’	<i>Tartuffe, ou l'Imposteur</i>
১৪ শওকত ওসমান	‘পাঁচটি নাটক’	

শওকত ওসমানের অনুরিত পাঁচটি নাটকের মধ্যে আছে: ক ‘নিম হাকিম’/ *Le Médecin malgré lui*; খ ‘ভগু ভাতুর্ক’/ *Tartuffe, ou l'Imposteur*; গ ‘ভূতা-যোগ’/ *Les Fourberies de Scapin*; ঘ ‘প্রেম মহোষধি’/ *L'Amour Médecin*; ঙ ‘নরদেবী’/ *Le Misanthrope* ।

এছাড়া অতুলকৃষ্ণ বসুর ‘কপণের ধন’ ( ১৩০৭ ) স্পষ্টত *L'Avare* দ্বারা প্রভাবিত । তাঁর অন্ত্যস্ত প্রহসনগুলির ওপরও ( যেমন ‘ঈশ্বরতার’, ‘খাসদখল’, ‘ভিসমিস’ ) মলিয়ার-এর প্রভাব চূর্ণক্য নয় । অতুলকৃষ্ণ মিত্রও প্রবন্ধ নাটক ছাড়াও মলিয়ার অবলম্বনে আরো কয়েকটি গীতিনাট্য ও প্রহসন ( যেমন ‘ঠিকে ভূন’, ‘রঙ্গরাঙ্গ’ ) লিখেছিলেন । অবনীন্দ্রনাথের মতে, জ্যোতির্জিত্রনাথের ‘অলৌকিকবাহু’র প্রট মলিয়ার থেকে নেওয়া । সুকুমার সেন তাঁর ‘বাসুদেব সাহিত্যের ইতিহাস’ ( ২৩ ও ৪ খণ্ড )-এ মলিয়ার থেকে গৃহীত কাহিনী অবলম্বনে লেখা আরো কিছু নাটকের উল্লেখ করেছেন । যেমন সৌরীন্দ্র-মোহন মুখোপাধ্যায়ের ‘বৎসিকিৎ’ ( ১৯০৮ ) মলিয়ার-এর নাটক অবলম্বনে লেখা । দ্বিজেন্দ্রলালের ‘প্রায়শ্চিত্ত’ ( সংশোধিত নাট্যরূপের নাম ‘বহুৎ আচ্ছা’ )—ক্লাসিক থিয়েটারে অভিনীত ) নাটক বিষয়ে সুকুমার সেনের অভিমত, ‘লেখকের মতে বইটি মলিয়ারের ধরনের নাট্যরচনা, কিন্তু আসলে ইহা বালেন্স ছাড়া কিছু নয়’ । প্র. না. বি.-র ‘দক্ষিণ

পাড়ার মেয়েরা' (১৩৪২) স্পষ্টতই মনে করিয়ে দেয় *Les Précieuses ridicules* নাটকটি।

কিন্তু মলিয়ার প্রভাবিত নাটক আপাতত আমাদের আলোচ্য নয়। আমরা শুধু যে নাটকগুলি প্রত্যক্ষভাবে মলিয়ার-এর রূপান্তর বা তরজমা, সেইগুলি সম্পর্কেই আলোচনা সীমাবদ্ধ রাখবো। ওপরের তালিকা থেকে লক্ষ করি যে রঙ্গালয়গুলির সঙ্গে ঘনিষ্ঠভাবে যুক্ত (অতুলকৃত্ত মিত্র, গিরিশচন্দ্র ঘোষ, অবিনাশচন্দ্র গঙ্গোপাধ্যায়, নির্মলশিব বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় প্রমুখ) এমন বহু নাট্যকার মলিয়ার বিষয়ে উৎসাহী। তাঁর কমেডি এবং গ্রহসনগুলি আমাদের নতুন এক পথ দেখালো—বিদেহ ছাড়াও যে ব্যঙ্গ হয় রঙ্গগুণে ব্যক্তিগত আক্রমণও যে সর্বজনীন হ'তে পারে সেটা আমরা লক্ষ করলাম। তাছাড়া যে সামাজিক টাইপগুলিকে মলিয়ার পরিহাস করেছেন, অর্থাৎ চিকিৎসক যিনি চিকিৎসাবিধা ছাড়া সবই জানেন, পণ্ডিত নৈসর্গিক যার সাধারণ কাণ্ডজ্ঞান নেই, তও ভগ্নদ্বী ধর্মী যার কাছে ব্যাবসা, স্বার্থপর ব্যক্তি যিনি নিজেকে বুদ্ধিমান ভাবেন, স্বাধীন ভেনানা যিনি কল্লনার জগতে বাস করে, হঠাৎ বড়োলোক যিনি পূর্বপরিচয়কেই অস্বীকার করতে চান—এ ধরনের ব্যক্তি যেমন সত্তরের শতকের ফ্রান্সেও ছিলেন, উনিশ শতকের বাঙলা দেশেও ছিলেন।

আরেকটি জিনিশ লক্ষ করবার মতো। মলিয়ার-কে নিজেদের তাগিদে আবিষ্কার করেছিলেন আমাদের নট-নাট্যকার-পরিচালকেরা। কোনো ক্লাসঘরে বিদেশী অধ্যাপকের বক্তৃতা শুনে আমরা তাঁর সম্পর্কে উৎসাহী হইনি—তৎকালীন পরিবেশের সঙ্গে মলিয়ার-এর প্রাসঙ্গিকতা তাঁরা নিজেরাই খুঁজে নিয়েছিলেন। রবীন্দ্রনাথের নাটকগুলি বাম দিলে বাঙলা নাট্যসাহিত্যে যা-কিছু উল্লেখযোগ্য সৃষ্টি তা এই গ্রহসন-শাখায়। সেদিক দিয়ে আমাদের সংস্কৃতিতে মলিয়ার-এর প্রভাব অনেক দূরপ্রসারী। জ্যোতিরিন্দ্রনাথ-গিরিশচন্দ্র প্রমুখ হয়তো হঠাৎই আবিষ্কার করেছিলেন মলিয়ারকে। কিন্তু আকস্মিক পরিচয় মোটামুটি স্থায়ী হ'লো। গিরিশচন্দ্রের সঙ্গে মলিয়ার-এর পরিচয় কীভাবে হ'লো সে-সম্পর্কে তাঁর জীবনীকার অবিনাশচন্দ্র গঙ্গোপাধ্যায় লিখেছেন :

১৩১৩ সালের হেমন্তাগমে অর্থাৎ কার্তিক মাসের প্রারম্ভেই গিরিশচন্দ্র পুনরায় ইাপানী পীড়ায় আক্রান্ত হন। শীতকালে দারুণ যন্ত্রণায় যখন তিনি গৃহে আবদ্ধ, সেই সময়ে বড়দিনের ক্রিয়াদিবস পূর্বে মিনার্ভার কর্তৃপক্ষগণ একদিন তাঁহাকে দেখিতে আসিয়া দুঃখ প্রকাশ করিয়া বলিলেন, “মহাশয়, সব খিয়েটারে নুতন বই হইতেছে, আপনি পীড়িত, আমরা কিছুই করিতে পারিলাম না।” সেই রুগ্ন অবস্থায় গিরিশচন্দ্র বলিলেন, “ভাবিবেন না, বাহা হোক কিছু একটা করিয়া দিব।” সেই দিনই তিনি স্বপ্রসিদ্ধ ফরাসী নাট্যকার মলিয়ারের

গ্রন্থাবলী পড়িতে আরম্ভ করিলেন এবং কয়েক দিবসের মধ্যেই মলিয়ারের “L’Amour Medecin” অবলম্বনে ‘ম্যামসা-কা-ভ্যামসা’ প্রহসন রচনা করিয়া বড়দিনের নূতন প্রহসনের অভাব পূর্ণ করিলেন।<sup>৬</sup>

পরে তিনি পান্টাওয়ার মন্তব্য করেছেন :

গিরিশচন্দ্রের প্রদর্শিত পথ অনুসরণ করিয়া তৎপরে সুপ্রসিদ্ধ গীতি-নাট্যকার স্বর্গীয় অতুলকৃষ্ণ মিত্র মহাশয় ‘মলিয়ারের’ গ্রন্থাবলম্বনে তুফানী, ঠিকে ভুল, বঙ্গরাজ প্রভৃতি অনেকগুলি গীতিনাট্য ও প্রহসন রচনা করেন এবং তাহা সুখ্যাতির সহিত মিনার্ভার অভিনীত হয়।<sup>৭</sup>

অমিনাশচন্দ্র গঙ্গোপাধ্যায় নিজেও মলিয়ার অবলম্বনে একটি নাটক রচনা করেছিলেন, দেউা আমরা আগেই দেখেছি। অপরেণচন্দ্র মুখোপাধ্যায়ের নেপা প’ড়ে জানতে পারি যে মলিয়ারের-এর সঙ্গে অতুলকৃষ্ণের পরিচয়ও নিতান্ত দায়ে প’ড়ে :

গিরিশচন্দ্র ভখন কোহিনুরে। কর্তৃপক্ষ উপায়ান্তর না দেখিয়া অতুলবাবুকে ‘মলিয়ারের’ The Blunderer [L’E’ourdi] বইখানি বাঙ্গালার রপান্তরিত করিতে বলেন। শোমবারে বই লেগা আরম্ভ হইল—সঙ্গে সঙ্গে ব্রিহাঙ্গালও চলিল। বই ছোট—দুই অঙ্কের, নাম হইল ‘তুফানী’। ১৩১৫ সালের ৩রা জ্যৈষ্ঠ—‘নৃরজাহানের’ দশম অভিনয় রজনীর সঙ্গেই তুফানী বিক্রয় হইল ৬০০ টাকা। এই বিক্রয় উত্তরোত্তর বাড়িয়া প্রায় হাজারে দাঁড়াইয়াছিল। ‘তুফানী’র একপাশে জমিদার প্রধান কারণ পূর্কেই বলিয়াছি, আচার্য্য অর্দ্ধেন্দু-শেখরের শিক্ষকতা।<sup>৮</sup>

মলিয়ার বিষয়ে সেগুণে আমাদের আগ্রহ যেহেতু কেতাবি নয়, সেজন্য দেখতে পাই বাঙালায় মলিয়ারের-এর খাতি অম্বাদের চেয়ে স্বাধীন রূপান্তরের সংখ্যা অনেক বেশি। গত দশ বছরে লোকনাথ ভট্টাচার্য্য কিংবা শওকত ওসমান মলিয়ার অম্বাদে উৎসাহী হয়েছেন, কিন্তু যতদূর জানি তাঁরা কেউই রঙ্গালয়গুলির সঙ্গে প্রত্যক্ষভাবে যুক্ত নন। মোতিরসুন্দর্য্য ঠাকুরের ‘হঠাৎ নবাব’ তাঁর ভাষায় ‘নামান্তরিত স্বাধীন অম্বাদ’। কিন্তু এই নাটকে তিনি কিছু অংশ সংক্ষেপ করলেও যথাসম্ভব মূলগ্রন্থ থাকবার চেষ্টা করেছেন। এমনকি চরিত্রগুলির নামের রূপান্তরেও মূল নামের ধনিগুলি রক্ষিত হয়েছে, যেমন, Jourdain এখানে জুর্দন খাঁ, Nicole এখানে নকুলিয়া, Covielle কবুল খাঁ, Dorimène দেলমনিয়া ইত্যাদি। কিন্তু ‘দায়ে প’ড়ে দারগ্রন্থ’ বিষয়ে জ্যোতিব্রহ্মনাথ লিখেছেন—“মোলিয়ারের কৃত ‘মারিমাগ ফোর্সে’ অবলম্বনে।” বলা বাহুল্য এই অবলম্বিত

ইংরেজিভাষায় মলিয়ের-এর নাটকের অল্পবানও আছে, আবার মলিয়ের অবলম্বনে লেখা নাটকও বহু আছে। ড্রাইডেন, শাউওয়েল প্রমুখ অনেকেই মলিয়ের থেকে প্রট গ্রহণ করে নাটক লিখেছেন। কিন্তু আমাদের অনেক নাট্যকারদের মধ্যে দেখতে পাই অল্পবাদ এবং রূপান্তরের ভেদরেখা খুব শিথিল। অল্পবাদের নীতির দিক দিয়ে জ্যোতিষ্মিন্রনাথের 'হঠাৎ নবাবের' সঙ্গে 'দায়ে প'ড়ে দারগ্রহ'-র তফাৎটা কোথায় সেবিষয়ে তাঁরা খুব কমই অবহিত। এই প্রবণতার পরিচয় আছে কালীচরণ মিত্র প্রণীত 'অন্নমধুর' নাটকের ভূমিকায় :

জগদ্বিখ্যাত ফরাসী নাটককার (Moliere) মলিয়ারের *Le Médecin Malgre' Lui* অবলম্বনে 'অন্নমধুর' বিরচিত।

মিলনাস্ত ও হাস্তরসাত্মক নাটক রচনায় মলিয়ার অধিতীয়। *Le Medecin* তাঁহার সর্বোৎকৃষ্ট হাস্তরসাত্মক নাটিকা। খাঁটা বাঙ্গালা ছাচে ঢালিলে মূলের সৌন্দর্যহানি ঘটে। সৌন্দর্য নষ্ট বা বিকৃত করিবার অধিকার কাহারও নাই। আমিও এ অনধিকার-চর্চায় বাহাদুরী লইতে যাই নাই। তবে বাঙ্গালীর জন্ত বাঙ্গালা রকমের সামান্ত একটু পালিস দিয়াছি মাত্র।

কালীচরণ মিত্র যখন বলেন যে খাঁটি বাঙলা ছাচে ঢাললে মূলের সৌন্দর্যহানি ঘটে, তখন মনে হয় অল্পবাদই তাঁর অভিপ্রেত। কিন্তু তাঁর পরেই যখন তিনি বাঙালির জন্ত বাঙলা রকমের সামান্ত পালিশ দেবার কথা বলেন, তখন তাঁর লক্ষ্য হয় রূপান্তর। আমরা নিচে পূর্বোক্ত নাটক থেকে অংশবিশেষ উদ্ধৃত করছি এটা দেখাবার জন্ত যে বঙ্গীকরণে কতটা পালিশ পড়েছে। তিনি তাঁর ভূমিকায় মূল ফরাসি নাটকের নাম দিয়েছেন। আমাদের পক্ষে নিশ্চিতভাবে বলা মুশকিল, তিনি ইংরেজি অল্পবাদ না মূল ফরাসি ব্যবহার করেছেন। যাই হোক, আমরা ইংরেজি যে-অল্পবাদের সঙ্গে পাঠ মেলাবো, তার উল্লেখ গ্রন্থপঞ্জিতে আছে।

প্রথম দৃশ্য - কুটার প্রাঙ্গণ

নটর ও যোগদ্বা

নট। না, না, না, - তোর কথা শুনবোই না। জানিস্‌নি - মাণী, আমি কে? আমি ছুনিয়ার বাদসা, আর তুই আমার বাদী। আমার কাজ - সাফ হকুম করা; তোর কাজ - যেমাম তালিম করা।

মোক্। 'কত সাধ দায়রে চিতে, হাতীর পিঠে হাওনা দিতে'। উনি বলেন -  
বাদসা! ইস, নবাব খাঞ্জা খা! ওরে মিন্সে! জানিস্-আমি কে?  
আমি রাণী, তুই রাণীর অন্তর মহলের খাস চৌকিদার।

নট। হাঁ, একটা রাণী বটে, তা কে জানে চাকরাণী আর -

মোক্। কি?

নট। আর কে জানে মেথরাণী।

মোক্। মর, দুম্ন, যত বড় মুখ নয় তত বড় কথা। দেখ্, দেখি একবার মুখখানি  
- কোথায় লাগে পাটরাণী! বরাং! - বরাং! - পোড়া কপাল!  
নইলে দিনরাত কেবল লাখি খাঁটা, আর দাসীর মতন খাটা।

নট। হুঁ। তারি হুক্ কথা ঐটী - লক্ষা কাণ্ডের ঐ যে 'অস্তি কস্ত মূনিম্বাতা  
হুঁ - উ - উ - শুধা' - কিনা ছবছ মাকাল ফল যত মেয়েলোকের দল।

মোক্। আ মরি! পণ্ডিত সেজে আবার শোলোক আওড়াচ্ছেন!

নট। জানিস্-আমিও একজন পণ্ডিত। এই দশখানা গ্রামের ভিতর দেখা  
দেখি এমন একজন লোক যে আমার মত বুদ্ধি ধরে, কি আমার মত  
লেখাপড়া জানে!

মোক্। কি আমার সরস্বতীর বরপুত্র গো!

নট। আরে মাগি তুই বুঝি কি? তোর বাপ ঠাকুন্না, তার বাপের বাপ,  
তার বাপই বা বুঝবে কি? চাষা কি জানে মদের স্বাদ? জহরী  
নইলে কি জহর চেনে? জিগ্গেস কর্গে ঐ দাদাঠাকুরকে -

মোক্। বাপস্ত! মুখে পোকা পড়ুক, মুখ দিয়ে বস্তু উঠুক, ওলাউঠায় ধরুক  
- যা যা শীগ্গির যা, নিপাত যা -

নট। একথা? ও মুই পারম্ নি, পরাণ। তু আণ্ড আণ্ড যাউছন্তি, মূ পিছ  
পিছ - আঁচড় ধড়িকিড়ি।\*

এর সঙ্গে ইংরেজি অহুবাদ মিলিয়ে দেখা যাক :

# ACT I

## SCENE I

*Sganarel, Martina*

*Sganarel.* No, I tell thee that I will not do't, and that it  
belongs to me to talk, and to be master.

\* হাটকট শব্দকত ওস্খান অহুবাদ করেছেন 'মিহ হাকিম' নামে। উৎসাহী পাঠক মিলিয়ে দেখতে পারেন।

*Martina.* And I tell thee, that I'll have thee to live as I please, and that I'm not married to thee to endure thy frolics.

*Sganarel.* O the monstrous plague of having a wife ! How right was Aristotle, when he declared that a wife is worse than a devil !

*Martina.* Observe a little the notable man, with his block-head of an Aristotle.

*Sganarel.* Yes, notable man. Find me a faggot-binder, who understands, like me, to reason upon things, who has served for six years a famous physician ; and who in his younger days had his accidence by heart.

*Martina.* Plague on thee for an eternal ass.

*Sganarel.* Plague on thee for an impudent baggage.

*Martina.* Cursed be that day and hour wherei into my head to say yes !

*Sganarel.* Cursed be the horni sign to my ruin !

*Martina.* It will becomes you, truly, to complain of that affair. Oughtest thou to be one single moment without thanking Heaven that thou hast me for thy wife ? Or didst't thou merit such a person as I am ?<sup>২</sup>

শুধু সংলাপে নয়, ঘটনা-চিত্রণেও অনেক স্বাধীনতা চোখে পড়ে। অঙ্কদিকে জ্যোতিরিন্দ্রনাথের 'দায়ে প'ড়ে দারগ্রহ' এবং অবিনাশচন্দ্র গঙ্গোপাধ্যায়ের 'ওলোট-পালোট'-এর উৎস একই নাটক, কিন্তু দুটি নাটকের পরিণতি সম্পূর্ণ ভিন্ন। অবিনাশচন্দ্র তাঁর নাটকের ভূমিকা লিখেছেন, 'সুপ্রসিদ্ধ ফরাসী নাট্যকার মল্লিকায়ের "Le Mariage Force" অবলম্বনে এই রঙ্গ-নাট্যখানি রচিত হইয়াছে।' জ্যোতিরিন্দ্রনাথের স্বীকৃতিও অস্বল্প, 'মোলিঘের-কৃত "মারিয়াজ কোর্সে" অবলম্বনে।' কিন্তু জ্যোতিরিন্দ্রনাথের হাতে Dorimene, a young coquette রূপান্তরিত হয়েছে দশ বছরের দস্তি মেয়ে কমলমণিতে - গম্ভ্যমিতে নয়, দুইমিতেই তার আনন্দ। এই পরিবর্তনে জ্যোতিরিন্দ্রনাথের কচিবোধ হয়তো অনেকটা কুজ করেছে। বিয়ে পাগল বুড়োই হোক আর যাই হোক, তার সঙ্গে শিথিল স্বভাবের মেয়ের বিয়ে দেওয়াটা তাঁর কাছে অতিশ্রেষ্ঠ মনে হয়নি। অবিনাশচন্দ্রের নাটকে Dorimene রূপান্তরিত হয়েছে উদ্ভিলা-য় - সে শিথিল স্বভাবের নয়, তবে



তার একজন তরুণ প্রেমিক আছে এবং শেষ পর্যন্ত তারই সঙ্গে বিয়ে হবে। এই দুটি নাটকের শেষাংশ নিচে তুলে দেওয়া হ'লো :

### ওলোট-পালোট

গোবিন। ঝাঁচলুম বাবা! জ্বরলাল, তুনি জেনে-শুনে আমার এই পণ্ডিত  
ঠেকিয়ে দিয়েছিলে?

জ্বর। কেন—চুটিয়ে তো শেষ রক্ষা ক'রলে! তবে একটা কথা বংশ  
রক্ষা, সন্তানের মুখ-দর্শন—অগাধ সম্পত্তি ভোগ ক'রবে কে! —দেখ  
এক কাজ করো, —তুমি তো ঝোঁকের মানুষ—আর একটিকে ঝোঁকটা  
ফেল, —তোমার ঐ অর্থে একটা “অনাথ-আশ্রম” প্রতিষ্ঠা করো—, দিনে  
দিনে হাজার হাজার সন্তানের মুখ দেখবে—তোমার অর্থের সার্থকতা  
হবে—তোমার শ্রেষ্ঠ বংশে একটা অমর কীর্তি রেখে যেতে পারবে!

গোবিন। জ্বরলাল, তোমার প্রস্তাবের আগেই আমি সেই মতলব ক'রেছি।  
আমি কালই “আশ্রম বাড়ীর” নক্সা তৈরী ক'রতে দিয়ে এসেছি।  
তুমি যেন আমার প্রাণের কথা টেনে বার ক'রলে—প্রকৃত বন্ধুর  
লক্ষণই এই। এস বন্ধু, আর একবার কোলাকুলি করি। (পরস্পর  
আলিঙ্গন)

সকলে। সাধু শেঠস্বামী—সাধু!

মুরলী। মনের পাণ ব্যক্ত করাই ভাল, যথার্থই আমি নিজের স্বার্থে অন্ধ  
হ'য়ে নিজের গুণসম্পন্ন কন্যার স্বখ চাই নাই, অর্থের লোভে বালিকাকে  
জোর ক'রে এই বৃদ্ধের হাতে অর্পণ ক'রতে বাচ্ছিলুম। ভগবানের  
কৃপায়—উদ্ভিলার দৌভাগ্যেই এই ওলোট-পালোট ঘটে গেল! কন্যার  
পিতৃগণকে আমার এই নিবেদন, তাঁরা যেন টাকার মুখ না চেয়ে  
কন্যার মুখ “যোগ্য যোগ্যে যুক্তিতে” এই মহাজন-বাক্য রক্ষা ক'রতে  
সাধ্যমত ক্রটি না করেন।

ওপরের উদ্ধৃতিতে গোবিনটান, জ্বরলাল, মুরলীধর যথাক্রমে Sganarelle, Gerónimo,  
Alcantor-এর রূপান্তর। এবার এই অংশের সঙ্গে ‘দায়ে প'ড়ে দারগ্রহ’-র উপসংহার  
তুলনা করা যেতে পারে :

### দায়ে প'ড়ে দারগ্রহ

তুলসী। বাবার সব ঠিক আছে—কাজটা আগে হয়ে যাক।

জগ। না দাদা, ঢের হয়েছে; আর খেয়ে কাজ নেই! সকাল থেকেই  
আজ খেতে শুরু করেছি—এই প্রথম দফা আছাড় খেয়েছি—তার

পর গাল খেয়েছি—তার পর ঝাঁটা খেয়েছি—তার পর লাথি খেয়েছি—  
তার পর চাবুক খেয়েছি—তার পর কিল খেয়েছি এখন বাকি আছে  
কেবল খাবি খাওয়া—তারও আর বড় দেরি নেই।

সতীশ। তবে দেখছি, সব রকম হয়ে গেছে!

জগ। হাঁ, চর্যা চোত্ত লেহ পেয়, - সমস্তই!

রাম। বাপু, এইবার তবে দালানে চল, আর বিলম্ব নেই।

জগ। চলুন আপনি এগোন, (সতীশকে) ভায়া, কাছে কাছে থেকে,  
তোমাকে আজ ছাড়ছি নে—

সতীশ! যাক, এত দিনের পর দারগ্রহ করলে, ভালই হ'ল!

জগ। (ইসারায় তুলসীদাসকে নির্দেশ করিয়া) হাঁ প্যায়দায় করালে—  
দায়ে প'ড়ে দারগ্রহ! — বুঝলে? এখন চল—আস্তাবলে চল।

[ সকলের প্রস্থান ]

এই প্রসঙ্গে ইংরেজি অম্ববাদ থেকে শেবাংশটি উদ্ধৃত করা যেতে পারে :

Alcid Father, this gentleman is now pleased to listen to  
reason. He has determined to do things with a good  
grace, and you can give my sister to him.

Alcan. Sir, here is her hand; you have only to give her  
yours. Heaven be praised! I have got rid of her;  
it is for you henceforth to take charge of her character.  
Let us make merry and celebrate this happy marriage.<sup>১০</sup>

এখানে একটা কথা বলা দরকার। জ্যোতিবিন্দুনাথ যেখানে মূল নাটক বা চরিত্রের  
পরিবর্তন করেছেন, সেখানে আলাদা, কিন্তু সাধারণভাবে তিনি সংলাপে মূলগ্রন্থ।  
তার প্রমাণ জায়বন্ত এবং বোদাস্তবাগীশের (Pancrace এবং Marphurius-এর বঙ্গ-সংস্করণ)  
কথোপকথন। কিন্তু মোটের ওপর উভয়েই তাঁদের কচি অম্ববাদী মলিয়ারকে রূপান্তরিত  
করেছেন।

আমরা এতোকণ দুটি রূপান্তরিত নাটক নিয়ে আলোচনা করলাম। এবার একটি  
অনুদিত নাটক এবং একটি রূপান্তরিত নাটকের দৃষ্টান্ত নেওয়া যেতে পারে। নাটক দুটি  
হ'লো *L'Amour médecin* অবলম্বনে লেবা গিরিশচন্দ্রের 'ঘায়সা-কা-তায়সা' এবং  
শওকত ওসমান এর অম্ববাদ 'প্রেম মহৌষধি'।

গিরিশচন্দ্রের রূপান্তরে দু-একটি চরিত্র বর্জিত হ'লেও (যেমন ভাইসি *Luor'eeo*  
চরিত্রটি) সাধারণত অন্তিরঙ্গনই বেশি। মলিয়ার-এর অন্ত নাটকের কায়দায় তিনি  
দাস-দাসী (গরব-রতন) যথোপ যথোপ আরেকটি কাহিনী বোঝা করেছেন। নাথক

রসিক (Clitandre) অবশ্য ডাক্তার সেজে নয়, অবধূতের বেশে এসেছে। দৃশ্য উপস্থাপনা মোটামুটি মূল্যহীন হ'লেও সংলাপগুলি অপেক্ষাকৃত দীর্ঘ। যেমন :

( কণ্ঠ ক্রমশ করিয়া বেগে গবেষের প্রবেশ )

গরব ॥ ওমা কোথা যাবো, কি সর্বনাশ! বাপ মিলে কোথা গেল—  
শুনলে এখনি গলায় ঝাঁপ দেবে।

হারা ॥ কি কি—কি হয়েছে—চৈতন্য কেন?

গরব ॥ ওরে কি হলো রে—হায় হায়, এমন সর্বনাশ কি কারো হয়?  
কর্তা গেল কোথায়?

হারা ॥ ওরে—এই যে আমি! কেন দশবাই চণ্ডী হয়ে নাকিস? কি  
হয়েছে বল না?

গরব ॥ হায় হায়—বাপ শুনলে গলায় দড়ি দেবে! মেয়ে তো নয়, যেন  
জগদ্ধাত্রী! এমন সর্বনাশও হয়।

হারা ॥ ওরে, কি হয়েছে কি? গরব ও গরব—

গরব ॥ আমি জলে ঝাঁপ দিই গো—কর্তাকে এখনই দিতে পারবো না!

হারা ॥ কি সর্বনাশ হয়েছে! মাগী বলবেও না, কেবল ধেঁই ধেঁই করে নাচবে।

গরব ॥ ওগো, তোমরা কেউ কর্তাকে ডেকে দাও—

হারা ॥ ওরে, এই যে আমি।

গরব ॥ আমি এমন দম্বাজীতে তুলিনি; যাও, কর্তাকে ডেকে দাও!

হারা ॥ আরে, এই যে কর্তা—দেখ, না?

গরব ॥ আমি চোখে দেখতে পাচ্ছি, আমার বুকে ধমু ধরেছে। ওরে কি  
সর্বনাশ হলো রে—

হারা ॥ ফ্যাল ফ্যাল করে চেয়েই রইল! এই যে আমি, দেখ, না, আমি  
কর্তা আমি কর্তা—

গরব ॥ তুমি কর্তা? ঝাড়াও—তোমার গৌফ দেখি হাউরে—ও  
আমি চোখে দেখতে পাচ্ছি নে গো—

হারা ॥ জাখ না বেটা জাখ না (গৌফ দেখান)

গরব ॥ কর্তা আমাদের লম্বা লম্বা পা ফেলে পায়চারি করে।

হারা ॥ এই রে বেটা—এই রে বেটা (পায়চারি করণ)

গরব ॥ কর্তা আমাদের ঝাঁকারি মারে—

হারা ॥ তবে রে বেটা ভাকাপনা—

গরব ॥ অ্যা—তুমিই তো কর্তা—তুমিই তো কর্তা! —ওগো, সর্বনাশ  
হয়েছে গো—সর্বনাশ হয়েছে। দিমিঘনি—গো—

ইংরেজি অঙ্কবাহে এই কথোপকথন অনেক সংক্ষিপ্ত :

He runs on stage, pretending not to see Sganarelle.

Oh, what a terrible thing ! Oh my poor  
where are you ?

Sgan. (aside) What's this she's saying ?

Lis. running around), Unhappy father ! Whatever will you  
do when I tell you the news ?

Sgan. (aside) Whatever can it be now ?

Lis. My poor mistress,

Sgan. Something dreadful has happened !

Lis. Ah !

Sgan. (running after her ) Lisette !

Lis. (running away) What a terrible thing !

Sgan. Lisette !

Lis. What a misfortune !

Sgan. Lisette !

Lis. What a disaster !

Sgan. Lisette !

Lis. (stopping) Ah, master !

Sgan. What is it ?

Lis. Master !

Sgan. Whatever has happened ?

Lis. Your daughter. >>

গিরিশচন্দ্রের 'ঘায়সা-কা-তায়সা'র সঙ্গে শওকত ওসমান-এর 'প্রেম মহৌষধি'র প্রায় ষাট বছরের ব্যত্থান। কিন্তু গিরিশচন্দ্র যেহেতু রঙ্গালয়ের সঙ্গে ঘনিষ্ঠভাবে যুক্ত ছিলেন, সেজন্য তাঁর সংলাপ অনেক বেশি স্বচ্ছন্দ, তুলনায় শওকত ওসমানের ভাবা আড়ষ্ট। প্রসঙ্গত ঐ একই অংশের শওকত ওসমান-কৃত অঙ্কবাহ উদ্ধৃত করা যেতে পারে :

[ লিজেৎ মকে দৌড়ায়, গনারেলকে বা-বেখার ভাব করে ]

লিজেৎ। উহ, কি সাংঘাতিক ব্যাপার ! ওহ, আমার হৃৎগা হজুর !

আপনি কোথায় ?

গনারেল। ( স্বগত ) কি বলছে ও ?

লিজেৎ। ( এদিক-ওদিক দৌড়ায় ) হতভাগা বাপ ! সংবাদটা বললে, তুমি

করবে কী ?

গনারেল। ( স্বগত ) সেটা কী হতে পারে ?

লিজেৎ। হতভাগী মনিবনী।

গনারেল। সাংঘাতিক একটা কিছু ঘটেছে।

লিজেৎ। আহ !

গনারেল। ( তার পেছনে দৌড়ে ) লিজেৎ !

লিজেৎ। ( দৌড়ে পালাতে থাকে ) কি সাংঘাতিক ব্যাপার !

গনারেল। লিজেৎ !

লিজেৎ। কি দুর্ভাগ্য !

গনারেল। লিজেৎ।

লিজেৎ। কি দুর্বিপাক !

গনারেল। লিজেৎ !

লিজেৎ। ( পেমে ) আহ. ছজুর !

গনারেল। কি হচ্ছে !

লিজেৎ। ছজুর।

গনারেল। কি হয়েছে ?

লিজেৎ। আপনার মেয়ে !

গিরিশচন্দ্র দাসীস্ব মূখে 'দুর্ভাগ্য', 'দুর্বিপাক', 'সংবাদ' 'দুর্ভাগা ছজুর' ইত্যাদি শব্দ বসাতে ইতস্তত করতেন। আসলে অনেক অস্থবদক মূল্যহীন হ'তে গিয়ে বাগ্‌ধারা বিষয়ে সচেতন থাকেন না। ফলে তাঁদের বাক্যের গড়নে এমন বিদেশীয়ানা এসে পড়ে যে স্বাচ্ছন্দ্য হারিয়ে যায়। শব্দকত ওদ্‌মান-এর 'ভণ্ড তাত্ত্বিক' এবং লোকনাথ ভট্টাচার্যর 'তাত্ত্বিক' তার দৃষ্টান্ত। 'তাত্ত্বিক' নাটকের তৃতীয় অঙ্কের প্রথম দৃশ্য থেকে একটা নমুনা দি' গোড়াতে ইংরেজি অস্থবদটি দেওয়া হ'লো।

Danis. May thunder, this moment, strike the dead ; let me be everywhere, treated like the Greatest scoundrel alive, if any respect or power whatever shall stop me, and if I don't strike some masterly stroke.

Dorina. Moderate your passion for Heaven's sake ; your father did but barely mention it. People don't do all they propose, and the distance is great from the project to the execution.

লোকনাথ ভট্টাচার্য অংশটির অহুবাদ করেছেন এই ভাবে :

দামিস। শক্তির নামেই হোক আর সম্বন্ধের নামেই হোক, যদি নিষ্পেক্ষ সংবরণ আর না করতে পেরে ক'রে না ফেলি একটা প্রচণ্ড কাণ্ড, তো এই মুহূর্তেই মরি না কেন বজ্রাহত হ'য়ে, সর্বত্রই লোকে বলুক না কেন গাধা আমায়।

দোরিন। দম্মা ক'রে মাথাটা একটু ঠাণ্ডা কর। তোমার বাবা তো কথাটি পেড়েছেন মাজ। ইচ্ছে থাকে এক, কিন্তু সেইটাকে কাজে পরিণত করা কি সব সময়ে সম্ভব হয়? পরিকল্পনা আর তার নক্ষ্যের মাঝখানে কি কণ পথের ব্যবধান?

দামিস। বদমাশটার চক্রান্তের ইতি আমি ঘটাবই ওর কানে দুটো কথা বলতেই হবে আমাকে।

দামিস-এর সংলাপকে লেবেডেফ-এর আমলের ভাষা ব'লে ভুল করলে পাঠককে ঘোষ দেওয়া যায় না। শওকত ওসমান কৃত অহুবাদের নমুনা :

দামি। যদি ভয় বা অহুগ্রহ আমাকে থামিয়ে দেয় যদি আমি যোক্ষ্ম এক পিটুটির কথা চিন্তা না করি - তা-হলে আমি যেন ঠায়েই কুপোকাং হয়ে যাই, আর তুমি আমাকে ঘৃণ্য জ্যান্স ঠগ্ বলে ডেকো।

ভোরি। দোহাই ধোদার! উত্তেজিত হবেন না। কথাটা এই মাজ আপনাব পিতা পাড়লেন। মাহুয যা কতে চায়, তা-ই করে না। একটা চিহ্ন নিয়ে কিছু বলা আর তা করা দু'য়ে অনেক ফারাক।

দামি। ও কুস্তার ষড়যন্ত্র আমি চিরতরে খতম করতে চাই। ও-কে আমার কিছু বলার আছে।

ইতালীয় প্রবাদে বলে অহুবাদক মাহেই বিশ্বাসঘাতক। কিন্তু কিছু-কিছু অহুবাদক শুধু বিশ্বাসঘাতক নন, একেবারে ঘাতক বাঙলা অহুবাদ সাহিত্যে তার অসংখ্য নজির আছে।

মলিয়ার-এর ধরনে কিছু-কিছু প্রহসন এবং কৌতুক-নকশা রবীন্দ্রনাথ লিখেছেন। তাঁর 'গোড়ায় গলদ' ( ১৮২২ খ্রী: 'শেষরক্ষা' ), 'চিরকুমার সভা' ( ১৯১৬ ), 'বৈকুণ্ঠের খাতা' ( ১৮২৭ )-র অনেক চরিত্র এবং ঘটনার উপস্থাপনা মলিয়ার-কে মনে করিয়ে দেয়। 'হাস্তকৌতুক' ( ১২০৭ )-এর অন্তর্গত "খ্যাতিবিজয়নাথ"-র দুঃখিত দম্মা, "সুস্বাচিটার"-এর কেবলরাম-চণ্ডীচরণ অথবা "অন্তোষ্টি সংকার"-এর চরিত্রগুলি মনে হয় যেন মলিয়ার-এর নাটক থেকে উঠে এসেছে। তবে ব্যক্তিগতভাবে রবীন্দ্রনাথ মলিয়ার বিষয়ে খুব উৎসাহী ছিলেন না। তিনি স্পষ্টই স্বীকার করেছেন :

আমি মোলিয়ারের বিষয়ে একরকম অনভিজ্ঞ। তাঁর সম্বন্ধে যতটুকু জ্ঞান, তা জ্যোতিষাদার বাংলা অহুবাদ ও সমালোচনার ভিতর দিয়ে

হয়েছে; আর বোধ হয় মোলিয়ারের ইংরাজী অঙ্কবাদও কিছু কিছু পড়েছি।<sup>১৩</sup>

এই স্বীকারোক্তির সত্ত্বেই সম্ভবত রবীন্দ্রনাথের জীবনীকার প্রভাতকুমার মুখোপাধ্যায় বলেছেন যে, তাঁর প্রহসনগুলি মলিয়ের বা শেরিডান-এর মতো নয়। কিন্তু রবীন্দ্রনাথের প্রহসনগুলি নিয়ে বিশদ আলোচনা এখনো পর্যন্ত হয়নি। হ'লে দেখা যাবে যে তাঁর হাসির নাটকের আদর্শ ছিলেন জ্যোতিরিন্দ্রনাথ। আর এ বিষয়ে মলিয়ের-এর কাছে জ্যোতিরিন্দ্রনাথের ঋণও চূর্ণক্য নয়। হুতরাং প্রত্যক্ষভাবে না হ'লেও পরোক্ষভাবে রবীন্দ্রনাথের নাটকগুলিতে মলিয়েরর মেন্ডাজ এসে গেছে। এই প্রসঙ্গে উল্লেখযোগ্য যে পূর্বোক্ত মলিয়ের সম্পর্কিত ভাষণে রবীন্দ্রনাথ 'হঠাৎ নবাব'-এর বিস্তৃত আলোচনা করেছেন। 'শেষরক্ষা' এবং 'চিরকুমার সভা'র ঘটনাক্রমের আরোহণ অনেকটা মলিয়েরর। যেমন 'হঠাৎ নবাব' নাটকে দেখতে পাই নাটকীয় সংঘাত চরমে উঠেছে যখন পিতা তাঁর কন্যাকে ছোর করছেন তাঁর মনোনীত পাত্রকে বিয়ে করবার জন্য, অশ্রুদিকে কন্যাও জিদ ক'রে ব'সে আছে তার প্রেমিককে ছাড়া আর কাউকে বিয়ে করবে না। কিন্তু এক্ষেত্রে উভয়ে যে একই ব্যক্তি তা পিতা বা কন্যা কারোরই জ্ঞান নয়। অল্পরূপ পরিস্থিতি দেখতে পাই 'শেষরক্ষা' নাটকে গদাইয়ের সঙ্গে ইন্দুমতীর বিবাহের সম্বন্ধ উপলব্ধ ক'রে। 'চিরকুমার সভা'র নূপবালা এবং নীরবালাকে দেখতে আসবার ঘটনাটিও একই ধরনের।

কৃষ্ণ কৃপালনী 'গোড়ায় গলদ' নাটকের রঙ্গরসে ভরা ভীক্স এবং মার্জিত সংলাপের জন্য একে তুলনা করেছেন অঙ্কার ওয়াইজের কমেডিগুলির সঙ্গে। রবীন্দ্রনাথের সঙ্গে মলিয়ের-এর এরকম কোনো প্রতিতুলনা আনার অভিপ্রেত নয়। ইংরেজ নাট্যকার শাভওয়েল মলিয়ের-এর L'Avare অবলম্বনে লেখা নাটকের ভূমিকায় বলেছেন, 'আমি একটুও অহঙ্কার না ক'রে বলতে পারি যে আমার হাতে মলিয়ের-এর নাটক নষ্ট হয়নি। আর আমাদের যতো ঠাটা কবিই ফরাসি কমেডির তরজমা করুন না কেন, এ-পর্বন্ত মূলের চেয়ে তা সব সময়ে ভালো হয়েছে। আমরা যে ফরাসি সাহিত্য থেকে প্রতীকার কবি, তার কারণ ইংরেজদের কোতুকরস অথবা উদ্ভাবনীশক্তির অভাব নয় - নিছক আলসেমি।' এরকম ঋণ-স্বীকৃতি অবশ্য কিঞ্চিৎ অভিনব। বলা বাহুল্য আমাদের দুর্বল নাট্য-সাহিত্যের তরফ থেকে এরকম দস্তোক্তি করা সম্ভব নয়। তবে আমাদের নাট্যকারেরা হয়তো বলতে পারেন, 'ইংরেজি নাটক প'ড়ে-প'ড়ে আমাদের যখন একঘেয়ে লাগছিলো, তখন কৃতি-বদলের জন্য আবিষ্কার করলাম মলিয়েরকে। এবং আমাদের হাতে মলিয়ের-এর উন্নতি না হোক, আমরা উপকৃত হয়েছি।'

১ "জা'রাসিন ও জ্যোতিরিন্দ্রনাথ", 'তুলনামূলক সাহিত্য', মুনীর চৌধুরী, ঢাকা।

২ 'বাংলার নাটক ও নাট্যাংশা', শচীন সেনগুপ্ত, কলকাতা, ১৩৬৪, পৃ ১১৬।  
এরপর থেকে বা. না. না. ব'লে নির্দেশিত।

৩ বা. না. না. পৃ ২৫।

৪ "ফরাসী-বাঙলা", মৈয়দ মুহুতবা আলী, 'দেশ' ফরাসী সংখ্যা, ৩১

'পুরাতন প্রসঙ্গ' ( ১ম, ২য়, ৩য় পর্ধ্যায়), বিত্ত মুখোপাধ্যায় সম্পাদিত, কলকাতা,  
[বণ, ১৩৭৩ বঙ্গাব্দ, পৃ ২৪৩।

৬ 'গিরিশচন্দ্র', অবিনাশচন্দ্র মুখোপাধ্যায়, কলকাতা ১৩৩৪, পৃ ৫৪৮। এরপর  
থেকে গি. ব'লে নির্দেশিত।

৭ গি. পৃ ৫৪৮।

৮ 'রঙ্গালয়ে ত্রিশ বৎসর', অপরেণচন্দ্র মুখোপাধ্যায়, স্বপন মজুমদার সম্পাদিত,  
কলকাতা, ১২৭২, পৃ ১২৬।

৯ "The Mock-Doctor", *Comedies*, vol. I, Molière, Ernest  
Everyman's Library, London, 1943.

*The Dramatic Works of Molière*, vol. II, C. H. Wall tr., 1901  
*Love's the Best Doctor in Molière, Five plays*, John wood tr.,  
Penguin classics, London, 1953

১২ "মোলিয়ার-প্রসঙ্গে," রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর, 'দেশ' ফরাসী সংখ্যা, ৩১ আষাঢ়,  
১৩৬২-তে পুনর্মুদ্রিত। লেখকি দুস্তায্য ব'লে কোতুহলী পাঠকের জ্ঞাত আরো কিছুটা অংশ  
উদ্ধৃত হ'লো :

'...মোলিয়ার সখ্যে এরূপ দোষারোপ কেউ কেউ করেন যে, তিনি যে সকল  
পাত্রের চরিত্র চিত্রিত করেচেন, অতিশয়োক্তির দ্বারা, স্বাভাবিকতার সীমা লঙ্ঘন করে  
তাদের দেখানো হয়েছে। এই উক্তির প্রতিবাদ বা সমর্থন করা আমার সাধ্য নয় কিন্তু এই  
বাহাঙ্গবাদ সখ্যে আমি মোটামুটি কিছু বলতে পারি।

বাইরে যা দেখছি তার প্রতিলিপি তৈরী করলে তা যথার্থ আর্ট ব'লে গণ্য হয় না।...  
রাজা লীয়ার বড়ের মধ্যে গিয়ে বিদ্বকের সঙ্গে যে রকম ভাবে বাক্যালাপ করলেন,  
পাগলেও ভেমন করে না। এই যে এখানে বাস্তবজগতের হিসাবে অতিশয়তা প্রকাশ  
হ'য়েছে, এটা কাব্যজগতের পক্ষে অতিশয় হয়নি। অতএব কাব্যে কোন অতিশয়োক্তি  
সত্য ও কোনটা অসত্য তার একটা আদর্শ আমাদের মনে রাখা চাই। অসঙ্গতি...  
অযৌক্তিকতা যেখানে মানবচরিত্রের কোনো একটি ব্যাপক পরিচয় দেয় সেইখানেই সে



সে মানবচরিত্রের একটা অবাস্তব বিষয়মাত্র, সেখানে সেটাতে কেবল ভাঁড়ামি প্রকাশ করা যায়।

মোলিয়ায়রের বিষয়ে আমার যতটুকু জ্ঞান আছে তাতে একথাই বলতে পারি যে, তিনি যে খ্যাতি লাভ করেছেন, শুধু ভাঁড়ামি করলে সেই পরিমাণ খ্যাতি পাওয়া যায় না। স্থানিক, সাময়িক কোনো বিশেষ জনমণ্ডল অত্যন্তক আঘাত ক'রে যে একটা সম্ভারকর্মের জনস্বার্থে উৎপন্ন করা যায়, কোনো বড় প্রতিভাশালী লেখক সেই সব খেলো জিনিস নিয়ে কখনো সাহিত্য সৃষ্টি করেন না। মোলিয়ায়রের 'লে বুর্জোয়া জাঁতিয়ম' নামক নাটকের অহুবাণ 'হঠাৎ নবাব'-টাই ধরা দাক। অকস্মাৎ কেউ অনেক টাকা পেলে তার কেমন মনের বিকার হয় এটাই এর মূল কথা নয়। কিন্তু এতে দেখানো হয়েছে যে, একজন 'হঠাৎ নবাব' ধনী ব্যক্তির চালচলন লক্ষ্য ক'রে তার অহুকরণে যে দুঃসাধ্য চেষ্টা করে সেটা কী জিনিস। সেই অহুকরণের চেষ্টা মানুষের মধ্যে একটা সাধারণ ব্যাপার—সে একজন ব্যক্তিবিশেষের বিশেষ বিকৃতি নয়। তাই এই অহুকরণ প্রায়ই অসঙ্গত আকার ধারণ করে, তাই মানুষের পক্ষে এ একটা চিরকেলে হান্তরসের বিষয়। সকল দেশেই, সকল কালেই এই হান্তরসের উপাদান মানুষের মধ্যে পাওয়া যায়—অন্তরের মধ্যে যে জিনিসটাকে পাওয়া যায়নি, বাইরের উপকরণ দিয়ে সেইটেকে কৃত্রিমভাবে খাড়া ক'রে লোককে ভোলাবার অগ্নিমিত প্রয়াস আমরা নানা জায়গায় নানা প্রকারেই দেখে থাকি—আর তাই নিয়ে হাসাহাসি চলে।

'হঠাৎ নবাব' নাটকটাকে এই হিসেবে অত্যাশ্চর্য্য বলি যেতে পারে যে তাতে অল্প পরিসরে অনেকখানি হাসির উপাদান ঘনীভূত ক'রে দেখানো হয়েছে।... বাস্তব সংসারে এই সকল হান্তরস ব্যাপার বিরল বিকীর্ণ হ'য়ে ক্ষণে ক্ষণে দেখা দেয়। মোলিয়ায়র তাকেই বেছে নিয়ে নিবিড় ক'রে সাজিয়ে তুলেছেন। এই সাজিয়ে গ'ড়ে তোলাতেই শিল্পীর বাহাদুরী। কক্ষ রসকে ব্যক্ত করতে হলেও শিল্পীকে এমনি ঘনীভূত চিত্র আঁকতে হয়। এই দুই ক্ষেত্রেই বিচার ক'রে দেখা মরকার যে, যা আকস্মিক, যা উপরে উপরে ভাসে, তাকে অবলম্বন করা হয়েছে, না, স্বভাবের গভীরতার লক্ষণগুলিকে অণুগমন করা হয়েছে।'

[১৯২ সালে মলিয়ারের-এর ত্রিশতবার্ষিক জন্মদিন উপলক্ষে বিশ্বভারতী সন্মিলনীর 'মঞ্চধানে' কথিত। অহুলিপি: সৌরভ ঘটক।]

## KARMA AS A MODE OF SALVATION IN T.S. ELIOT

Among the predominantly Indian concepts to be found in T. S. Eliot's works, the idea of 'Karma' as a mode of salvation is an important one. Eliot's concern with this idea can be traced through all his major works, and this paper proposes to examine the internal evidence in the light of relevant Indian sources.

But before we proceed to discuss the place of Karma in Eliot's works in any such detail, we should be aware of the three-fold meaning that Indian philosophy attributes to this term: 1) work, a deed, an action that renders fruit, 2) the yoga of action, and 3) the law of causation governing action and its effects on the physical as well as the psychological plane. It is to be realized that while the first one gives the basic meaning of the term Karma, the other two provide two major perspectives on its concept. My intention here is to study the place of Karma in Eliot in this double perspective for which the present paper will be divided into two sections. The first section will deal with Karma as a yoga as found in *Four Quartets*, while Karma as a law of causation in relation to Eliot's other major works will be discussed in the second.

### I *The Yoga of Karma in FOUR QUARTETS*

It is generally true for relation studies that once the basic assumption is agreed upon, the working out of the details presents no serious problem. Sometimes the relation to be established may seem far-fetched, but here due to Eliot's usual frankness about his sources my basic claim that Eliot's idea of Karma found in *Four Quartets* is a direct borrowing from Indian philosophy, more particularly from the *Bhagavad Gītā*, is not an assumption that needs to be proved by external evidence. Eliot always has been more than vocal about his admiration for this particular Hindu religious text, and he plainly mentions Kṛṣṇa, to the unhappiness of quite a few critics, at a climactic point of the *Quartets* while making generous use of some viewpoints of the *Gītā* in his own terms.

In *Four Quartets* Eliot proves himself to be one of the great exponents of the famous advice given by Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna "karmanyevadhikaraste ma phalesu kadacana"—you have the right to work, never think of the fruits of action. This particular aspect of Karma stressed by Eliot, has become well established as a definite point of view of the poet himself. Kṛṣṇa's advice which is readily acceptable to Eliot, was not so readily acceptable to Arjuna, and assuming that his readers will be in a similar confused state as Arjuna, Eliot takes almost as much pain as Kṛṣṇa to explain why and how one should and could render action without thinking of the reward for it. We practically hear an echo of the *Gītā* in Eliot's message when he says that only by cultivating the way of dispossession and detachment does one arrive at the ideal point where he acts, but without any interest in the fruits. This dispassion comes when one gains control over body and mind through self-discipline. Eliot's attitude here sprang from his readings of the *Gītā* and Patanjali's aphorisms, and his philosophy establishes a direct relationship with the system of yoga preached in the former. To put the mind in a state of vacuum where nothing matters is the very basic requirement for every yoga in general. Only after achieving this mental equilibrium is one ready to follow the way of any particular yoga which ultimately can reveal the absolute truth to him. This discipline of mental attitude is what Eliot proposes to achieve before initiating any action.

I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope  
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love  
For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith  
But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.  
*Wait without thought*, for you are not *ready* for thought;  
So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing.<sup>1</sup> (p 126-127)

I have come across many interpretations of this passage, but for me it becomes especially meaningful in terms of the discipline of yoga. Until one is able to put his mind in a total vacuum, one is not ready to have any positive mental attitude, nor can he perform any physical action properly. Compare

Work done for a reward is much lower than work done i  
yoga of wisdom. Seek salvation in the wisdom of r  
How poor those who work for a reward !<sup>2</sup>

(Dūreṇa hyavaram karma buddhiyogād Dhanañjaya  
buddhou śarāṇamaṇviccha kṛpāṇā phalaheṭavaḥ. II.49)

When in recollection he withdraws all his senses from the  
attractions of the pleasures of sense, even as a tortoise with-  
draws all its limbs, then his is a serene wisdom.

(Yadā sampharate cāyaṁ kūrmo'ḥgānIva sarvaśaḥ  
Indriyāṇāṇdrīthebhyasasya prajāṇī pratiṭhita. II.58)

Once your serenity is achieved, you are *ready* for thought. Your hope and love and faith—all are attained now without attachment, and so for a right purpose.

In liberty from the bonds of attachment, do thou therefore the work to be done; for the man whose work is pure attains indeed the Supreme.

( Tasmādasaktaḥ satataṁ karmāṁ samācara  
asaktaḥ hyācāraṁ karma paramāpnoti puruṣaḥ.

As one attains the Supreme by doing action without attachment, the "darkness" becomes "light" and the "stillness" merges in "dancing". Compare

In the dark night of all beings awakes to Light the tranquil man. But what is day to other beings is night for the sage who sees.

( Yā nīṣā sarvabhūtānāṁ tasyāṁ jāgarti samyam  
tasyāṁ jāgrati bhūtāni sā nīṣā paśyato muneḥ. II.69 )

At this point one achieves the ability of pursuing a positive path towards salvation. Eliot, after establishing the importance and necessity of serenity, seems to be keen on Karma as his chosen path for achieving salvation, and conveys the basic message of Karma yoga, "You have the right to work, never think of the fruits of action," with a positive conviction.

But perhaps neither gain nor loss.  
is only the trying. The rest is not our business.

And do not think of the fruit of acti  
Fare forward. (p. 134)

The attainment of this particular mental attitude can lead us to resolve the puzzle commonly found in the paradoxical statements of Eliot. The best example finds repeated expressions in "Ash Wednesday".

Teach us to care and not to care  
Teach us to sit still. (pp. 61, 67)

This statement may be meaningful in Christian terms, but it is more immediately understood in terms of Karma : care enough to act, but be disinterested enough to ignore the fruits of action. As a mortal, everybody (including Kṛṣṇa or Buddha or Christ) must render actions, but no expectation should be attached to the deed. Everybody can arrive at that neutral state of mind through the practice of yoga. The following passage from

*Four Quartets* is an illustration where Eliot is solving the apparent contradiction between action and meditation recommending both in the same breath after the fashion of *Gītā*

We must be *still* and *still moving*  
 Into another intensity  
 For a further union, a deeper communion  
 Through the dark cold and the empty desolation. (p. 129)

Note the phrases "another intensity", "further union" and "deeper communion" they have an unmistakable association with the terminology as well as the other qualifying factors of yoga. The last line can be taken as referring to the state of vacuity one must go through before he learns to be "*still* and *still moving* into another intensity for a further union". However much Patanjali might have "mystified" him, as Eliot once said,<sup>4</sup> he was strongly attracted to his aphorisms which he came across again in more rational and practical terms in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, where through the Incarnation of Kṛṣṇa the possibility of a divine union is made more real.

Let us for a moment refer back to the lines quoted above from "Ash Wednesday". The idea of sitting still as a great human capacity is a thoroughly Indian concept that comes up repeatedly in Eliot. It is a quality to be taught; that is, a quality to be learnt. It is obviously neither 'grace' nor 'prayer', at the same time it is not human passivity, nor is it reliance on divine favour. The yoga of meditation (dhyana) is the only idea equivalent to sitting still which requires a great effort of body and mind. In a way, this is the very thing, "to care and not to care.....to sit still", that Buddha demonstrated through his own life by combining action, compassion and meditation.

In the *Bhagavad Gītā* the different ways have equal weight, and the apparently passive yogas like meditation, knowledge and devotion by being *positive* mental attitudes are a form of mental action as effective and important as Karma. When Kṛṣṇa introduces Arjuna to the various ways to gain union with the Eternal Godhead, he says

Ignorant men, but not the wise, say that Sāṅkhya and Yoga are different paths; but he who gives all his soul to one reaches the end of the two.

(Sāṅkhyayogou prthag bālāḥ pravādanti na pāṇḍitāḥ  
 ekamapyāsthitaḥ samyagubhayorvindate phalam. V.4)

is idea that Eliot rephrases in simpler terms :

And right action is freedom  
 From past and future also.  
 For most of us, this is the aim

By performing action without attachment man is liberated from the terrible 'wheel of birth and death'. After reiterating the concept of Karma most consistently in the third section of *Four Quartets*, Eliot seems to be substantiating its main message in "Little Gidding" in Christian terms.

For liberation — not less of love but expanding  
Of love beyond desire, and so liberation  
From the future as well as the past. Thus, love of a country  
Begins as attachment to our own field of action  
And comes to find that action of little importance  
Though never indifferent. History may be servitude,  
History may be freedom. (p. 142)

In the battlefield of Kuruksetra Kṛṣṇa faced the task of making Arjuna understand this same message. Initially Arjuna was attached to his "field of action" to the extent that he was unable to act, and he failed to realize that his action would be of "little importance" until the Lord Himself favoured him by revealing His own Ultimate Self as Kala (Time Eternal) in which everything is dissolved. Only now did Arjuna see the possibility of liberation by performing duty with disinterestedness (though never indifference). Eventually, at the end of the war, history does become "freedom" for Arjuna. History is servitude if we act with attachment, and freedom if we act without attachment. Is not this also the ultimate message of the *Mahābhārata*? The whole of *Bhagavad Gītā* had to be related by God Himself at that crucial point of the war just in order to explain that this involved action of war must be a disinterested Karma, the purpose of which is to achieve salvation ("For liberation—not less of love but expanding / Of love beyond desire, and so liberation/From the future as well as the past"). Love of a country (or clan, family) engenders a "field of action" to which in the beginning we are attached. If, however, we continue in this state of attachment, act because we love or hate, then we attribute too much importance to our actions and consequently suffer the "servitude" of history. But to act without attachment is to be free—to pass beyond "history".

Eliot's use of the Kṛṣṇa-Arjuna image in association with a strong emphasis on the theory of "niskama karma" practically evokes a parallel image of the Eliot-reader relation in our mind. The whole structure of *Four Quartets* with its universal spirit and philosophically religious overtone, also comes very close to the form and spirit of *Bhagavad Gītā*. Had Eliot advocated the way of disinterested action without openly associating the Hindu teachings of *Gītā* to go with it, it would have been more thrilling for the scholars to discover the source, but the immediate impact of his message might not have been half as much. In the age-old tradition of Hinduism the importance of "niskama karma" is very strongly established. Consequently, the

idea being a direct borrowing from the *Glā*, Eliot's acceptance of the way of disinterested action as a mode of salvation in the particular set-up of *Four Quartets* enjoys the benefit of the universal spirit of a tradition which offers extremely liberal conditions of salvation to all humanity.

## II *Karma as a law of causation in relation to predestination and free will*

Eliot's approach to this particular aspect of Karma has a complex character as the contradictory roles of predestination and free will in the execution of Karma always seemed to have intrigued him. Hence, when we propose to examine Karma as a law of causation in Eliot's works, our initial task is to recognize its intrinsic relation to the ideas of predestination and free will. The common belief that one has to face the consequences of an action either in this life itself (Christian/Hindu/Buddhist) or in a life after death (Christian) or in another birth (Hindu-Buddhist), only reveals man's natural inclination to justice. But, with the intrusion of predestination as an inevitability the whole logical structure of the Karma-consequence theory apparently collapses. There must exist, then, a different logic to justify the co-existence of predestination and free will in relation to Karma.

The justice that men have logically sought to establish is only an ideal situation which is hard to come by in reality. Perhaps because of this practical experience the Hindu-Buddhist theory of repeated births came up, while the Christian doctrine stressed the existence of heaven and hell as man's ultimate end which he meets only after death. A hypothetical life after death in some form seems essential to give the maljustice of this world the benefit of the doubt. It is in this dilemma that predestination secures a basic role.

Granting predestination its essential place, Hindu-Buddhist philosophy tried to work out a solution of this problem by making conditions for diverting the process of predestined consequences by doing right action at the right time with the help of free will. The Hindu-Buddhist view seems to suggest that free will and predestination are two parallel forces having their own courses in human life. Parallel forces never work together, and predestination, being more powerful with its foreknowledge of things to happen, seems to allow free will to take its course during the span of human life, to choose a right path or a wrong one, thus granting a chance to divert the predestined course of Karma and pattern of one's life for now as well as hereafter. In this life our actions are not basically determined by predestination, but are dictated mainly by free will. It is really an opportunity given to us to score over predestination. And the moment of death, according to the *Bhagavad Glā*, is the most important and proper moment in human life to exert free

will which shall have effect on one's next birth. Only when free will fails to make the right choice, the predestined consequences of Karma get the upper hand.

This particular solution of the complicated problem of the cross-relation of predestination, free will and Karma was discussed elaborately in a story called "Jones's Karma" written by May Sinclair, and published in the second issue of *Criterion*. That the story made a deep impression on Eliot can be seen from most of his plays, especially the last one, *The Elder Statesman*. As Eliot touched upon this problem of Karma in almost all his works, the logic he worked out for predestination's inextricable relation with free will seems to owe much to Miss Sinclair's story. It may be mentioned that this is a story within a story related by a Mahatma (a follower of Buddha) to Grigley to show how Karma's consequences work in the repeated lives of human beings and how one can avert them. In the course of conversation, basic issues of Indian philosophy such as Karma and predestination, free will and bondage, importance of the right choice and of the moment of death, are discussed. Since this story which was a direct outcome of Miss Sinclair's close readings of Indian philosophy, is very relevant to Eliot's concept of Karma, we will make textual references to it as we proceed to examine the issue in the light of Eliot's own plays.

The inevitability of Karma's consequences and the importance of free will as equally powerful parallel forces in making the right choice at the right moment, are emphasized very strongly in Eliot's most Christian play *Murder in the Cathedral*. Some details of this play seen from an Indian point of view offer an interesting study. Becket, with his prophetic qualities, seems destined to be a martyr—a saint. He seems to have foreknowledge of the whole future and relentlessly prepares himself for the blessed moment. Shortly after his appearance in the play says

All things prepare the event. Watch.

We watch and see things being revealed.

Fare forward to the end.

All other ways are closed to you  
Except the way already chosen. (p. 191)

Apart from the obvious relation to *Four Quartets*, it sounds very much like Patanjali, according to whom all things have already happened, but are being revealed to us gradually—in proper time. Now the terms in which Becket defines the true nature of Christian martyrdom are worth nothing.

... martyr, a saint, is always made by the design of  
God. ... A martyrdom is never a design of man; for the



true martyr is he who has become the *instrument of God*, who has lost his will in the will of God, not lost it but found it, for he has found freedom in submission to God. (p. 199; italics mine)

The teachings of *Gītā* also deliver the same message. Especially the term "instrument of God" reminds us of an identical phrase used by Kṛṣṇa when he implored Arjuna to become only the "instrument" of him by executing his duties "Nimittamatram bhava Savyasacin" (XI.33) — "Be thou the mere instrument (nimitta), left-handed archer!"

At this point the apparent conflict of predestination and free will is made most manifest and the issue needs to be taken up. The importance of free will, even after submitting to God's will, is voiced in the following lines of Becket

All my life they have been coming, these feet. All my life  
I have waited. Death will come only when I am worthy,  
And if I am worthy, there is no danger.  
I have therefore only to make perfect my will. (p. 2 )

The relationship expressed here between one's own free will and God's will is in consonance with the Hindu attitude. In the latter, 'purusakara', free will, and 'bhagya', fate, are not in conflict. With 'purusakara' alone one may not apparently be able to alter his fate, but he can stand up in challenge against it, thus qualifying himself for an eventual redemption. The idea of making one's will perfect comes back in *The Cocktail Party* in Buddha's own words, "work out your salvation with diligence", which is nothing but exerting one's free will in the proper way to avert predestined events.

Perfection of will is an even more important requirement at the moment of death in the Hindu doctrine. With the initial supposition that there is a predestined fate in reserve; a conscious human being has to strive to make his will perfect. Thus one's mind needs to be intent on God every moment of his life and, according to Hinduism, more particularly at the moment of death. This moment is supposed to be unique in human life when one gets release from the body. In the *Gītā* we see,

And he who at the end of his time leaves his body thinking of me, he in truth comes to my being : he in truth comes unto me.

(Antakāle ca māmeva smaranmuktvā kalevaram  
yaḥ prayāti sa madbhāvaṃ yāti nāstyatra śamsayaḥ. VIII. 5)

For on whomsoever one thinks at the last moment of life, unto him in truth he goes, through sympathy with his nature.

(Yaṃ yaṃ vāpi smaran bhāvaṃ tyajatyante kalevaram  
taṃ tamev 'ti Kounteya sadā tadbhāvabhāvataḥ. VIII. 6)

is is exactly what May Sinclair referred to in her story "Jones's Karma".

Time is nothing. Or it is everything. You can go forward or you can return in the path of time. You have only to will it so in the moment of dying. For, as the wish formed at the moment before sleeping is powerful in the waking life of the next day, so the wish formed in the moment of dying is all-powerful in the next life. People did not know how important that moment is, so they do not will.

Harry, in *The Family Reunion*, shows a remarkable awareness of this

I am afraid of sleep:  
A condition in which one can be caught for the last time. (p. 236)

But *Four Quartets* reflects the idea more unambiguously and directly establishing its source

At the moment which is not of action or inaction  
You can receive this : 'on whatever sphere of being  
The mind of a man may be intent  
At the time of death' (p. 134)

Consciousness at the moment of death leads one to salvation, and that is one way free will can have a victory over predestination. Because, as Eliot puts it, "to be conscious is not to be in time," but unfortunately, few among us strive for this consciousness which can lead us to the freedom achieved in the sphere of the timeless.

Through the foresight of the 'guardians' or sometimes of the protagonists themselves, the role of predestined events in relation to free will can be traced in most of the plays of Eliot. Harry, in *The Family Reunion*, realizing that "everything is irrevocable / Past unredeemable" moves from the world of Maya to the world of Reality and, with the help of the guardians chooses a right path towards his redemption. As against this, it is Julia, one of the guardians, illustrates the point in *The Cocktail Party*, for all concerned.

Everyone makes a choice, of one kind or another,  
And then must take the consequences. Celia chose  
A way of which the consequence was Kinkanja.  
Peter chose a way that leads him to Boltwell:  
And he's got to go there. (p. 386)

Of course Harcourt-Reilly is there with his superhuman power to envision things that are to happen as if they had happened already. He knows that Celia's death is predestined, and also tells Lavinia of her "appointed burden". One of the dialogues between Edward and the Unidentified Guest reinforces this image of a prophet

U.G. ... I have come to tell you that you will change your mind,  
But that it will not matter. It will be too late.



I have half a mind to change my mind now  
To show you that I am free to change it.

You will change your mind, but you are not free.  
Your moment of freedom was yesterday.  
You made a decision. You set in motion  
Forces in your life and in the lives of others  
Which cannot be reversed. (p. 329)

Edward, whose salvation is implied in the play, has an intuition of the truth

I see that my life was determined long ago  
And that the struggle to escape from it  
Is only a make-believe, a pretence  
That what is, is not, or could be changed.

Compare Harry's realization in *The Family Reunion*

O God, man, the things that are going to happen  
Have already happened. (p. 258)

The prophetic chorus also observes

I am afraid of all that has happened, and of all that is to come ;  
Of the things to come that sit at the door, as if they had been there always.  
And the past is about to happen, and the future was long since settled. (p. 256)

And of course Becket can say the last word about this, being a seer himself :

... For every life and every act  
Consequence of good and evil can be shown.

This has been especially shown in Eliot's last play *The Elder Statesman*, which deals with the same problems of Karma and its consequences. I strongly feel that May Sinclair's story "Jones's Karma" extends its influence up to this last play of Eliot's. The three main acts that had been rendered by Jones for which he faces the consequences in the next life, are very similar to the three guilts that made Lord Claverton suffer and face consequences in this life alone. Actually, the change of names in *The Elder Statesman* (Dick Ferry to Lord Claverton, Fred Culverwell to Frederico Gomez, and Maisie Montjoy to Mrs Carghill) is a significant aspect through which the persons involved are symbolically reincarnated in their new forms. The forgotten past comes back in human forms to Lord Claverton. In this way Gomez and Mrs Carghill are more symbolical than real as characters, and their sudden appearance comes as a reminder that no deed can be escaped, its effects must follow.

I am not unaware of the fact that the Christian doctrine of grace comes close to the Hindu idea of predestination. As grace rules out all human merit and requires only faith in the Saviour, it gives rise to a doctrine of pre-

destination which accepts that one's eternal destiny is determined by God. But in the Cristian world there has been a keen controversy over the relation of grace and predestination to free will. Roman Catholicism, in the interest of leaving room for human freedom, identifies predestination with divine foreknowledge. I am also aware of the Christian implication of the idea of inevitability of consequences following an action, but Eliot's treatment of Karma which is interwoven with the ideas of predestination and free will, and in particular with the importance of the moment of death, lend themselves perfectly to an Indian interpretation. Eliot consistently emphasized these ideas in unambiguous terms, and interestingly enough as a playwright he always lent them to spiritually superior characters.

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- 1 *Srmat Bhagavad Gita* (Sanskrit-Bengali edition), trans. Swami Jagadishwarananda and ed. Swami Jagadanada (Calcutta, 1962), chapter II, verse 47. All subsequent references are to this edition.
  - 2 *The complete Poems and plays : 1909-1950*, T. S. Eliot. Harcourt, Brace and Company, N.Y., 1958. All subsequent quotations are from this edition.
  - 3 Trans. Juan Mascaro, *The Bhagavad Gita* (Penguin ; Harmondsworth, England, 1962). All subsequent translations are Mascaro's unless otherwise mentioned.

**'KAVYAMIMAMSA' FOR OUR TIMES  
OF LITERARY HISTORY IN INDIA**

It will seem a truism to insist that literary works are the primary concern of a literary historian. Although he would not perhaps have described himself as one, Albrecht Weber was conscious of the need of "a classification of the Sanskrit literature into works of Poetry, works of Science and Art, and works relating to Law, Custom, and Worship."<sup>1</sup> Later scholars have not been so careful. Maurice Winternitz, for example, states in his introduction "As regards its contents, Indian literature embraces everything which the word 'literature' comprises in its widest sense religious and secular, epic, lyric, dramatic and didactic poetry, as well as narrative and scientific prose." Winternitz rather than Weber has won the day, and no Indian literary historian since then has sought to tame this loose and baggy monster. Practically anything written (and, in later eras, anything printed) in any language has been included, without necessary reservations, in the history of literature of that language.

Such tyranny of the text may well be a legacy of Indological studies, especially as developed by Western scholars. For Indologists, any ancient writing, whether a two-line inscription or a two-thousand-line composition, was a thrilling source of information. The very existence of a text was obviously of far greater importance, when discovered, than its identity as literature. Somewhere along the line the two terms 'text' and 'literature' became interchangeable by careless usage, and subsequent sorting out does not seem to have taken place when the material was arranged for historical treatment. Our own historians have not been very much more discriminating. Some standard works on Indian history ignore the existence of literature altogether, while others tend to lump together treatises on grammar and astronomy and medicine with works of poetry and drama as the 'literature' of a period.<sup>2</sup> Our literary scholars have on occasion been less careless. A volume entitled *Studies in Indian Literary History* carries at least one paper relating to a manuscript on cosmetics, another to a text enumerating names and colours

of horses.<sup>4</sup> Such information will have to be spurned by literary historians, in spite of the plea for the widest possible basis for literary historiography.

If on the one hand we have at our disposal vast collections of minutiae that are of little use to the literary historian, on the other hand we have to contend with facile generalizations that, like war-time communiques, survey the general situation without revealing any critical detail. Thus, the preponderance of poetical composition in our ancient literature has given rise to the impression that all is 'poetry'. Such an impression overlooks the great variety of composition among our ancient texts and leaves little room for considering the inter-relationship between these compositions. Some blame for this may be attached to our ancient poeticians who freely used the term 'kavya' for all composition, and were generally more interested in distinguishing good kavya from bad kavya than between kavya and non-kavya. Again, there is a popular impression that the bulk of our medieval literature consists of religious or devotional verse. Here is a descriptive norm which gives little value to the art involved in the making of a poem. As any student of literature knows, a particular piece may be good religion but bad poetry. Also, religion in India has often meant a moral stand or a code of conduct; rather than the acceptance and dissemination of a given dogma. When Namdeva or Kabir or Nanak spoke of equality among men, they were propagating a social philosophy rather than a religion. Yet all three are labelled as devotional poets in our histories of literature. All such generalizations will have to be questioned and corrected according to valid and workable principles of literary discrimination, before we may proceed to the writing of literary history.

Winternitz stated in his introduction "The history of Indian literature is the history of the mental activity of at least 3000 years, as expressed in speech or in writing". Such a statement would fit a history-of-ideas approach (of the kind recommended by Arthur Lovejoy) better than a concept of literary history. Winternitz, with his eye mainly on the stages of language development he has called 'Ancient Indian' and 'Middle Indian', was probably anxious to provide for both the orally composed Vedas and other *smṛti* or *śruti* texts as well as the later written compositions in his definition. He may also have worried about the necessity of having to erect a historical scheme spanning thirty centuries on the foundation of relatively few texts, hence decided to make the scheme as inclusive as possible. But his is a definition which is patently inadequate for the kind of literary history that is being proposed here.

Our own scholars of antiquity cannot help out here, because the need to define what is literature does not seem to have been felt by them. The

very word 'sahitya' which is used in most modern Indian languages for 'literature' had a somewhat different meaning in Sanskrit poetics, as is suggested by the following legend recounted by Ramaranjan Mukherji :

Once upon a time, while Saraswati was going to the celestial assembly as a judge, this child, named Kavyapurusha persisted in following her ; as he was desisted by the mother, because, as she pointed out, the gates of Brahmaloaka are open only to one who holds a permit to that effect from the supreme creator, he became angry and left the place in a hurry. This conduct of Kavyapurusha agitated his friend Kumara, who reported the whole thing to his mother Gauri and she also in order to prevent Kavyapurusha, created Sahityavidyavadhu as his bride and asked her to follow him. The bride had to adopt various kinds of dress and dramatic devices to captivate the mind of her lover, who was completely won over by her at the end of the journey. The pair was then married in Vatsagulma by the Gandharva form of marriage\*.

Thus was poetry (Kavyapurusha) wedded to the principle of literary criticism (Sahityavidyavadhu). Ramaranjan Mukherji explains it thus : "The word *Sahitya* seems to be derived from *Sahita* ; when Poetry is defined as a combination of sound and sense, it is quite in the fitness of things that the science of criticism that propounds this definition is called *Sahitya*. Rajasekhara himself says that this branch deals with the different types of relation existing between *śabda* and *artha*."† It may be noted in this connection that in English usage the word 'literature' originally meant "knowledge or study of literature", but later came to mean "literary production in general" or "body of writings in a period, country or region", before it was narrowed down to the modern meaning of imaginative literature, that is, "poetry and imaginative, fictive, prose".‡

Undistracted by any doubts about what is and what is not literature, our ancestors indulged almost exclusively in consideration of the components and values of literature. Numerous and voluminous texts in poetics from Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* (finalized probably around 300 A.D.) to Jagannatha's *Rasagaṅgādhara* composed between 1641 and 1650) concerned themselves with definition, classification and illustration of literary concepts and terms. Perhaps even prior to Bharata, the *Agnipurāṇa* had dealt with the principal features of *kavya*, *natya*, *rasa*, *bhava*, *riti*, *virtu*, *abhinaya*, *alamkara*, *kavya-dosa* and *kavya-guna*—in fact, the whole gamut of topics in poetics and dramaturgy that was to keep Sanskrit scholars busy all over India for the next ten centuries or more. But posterity has tended to reserve the use of these terms for application only to our classical texts and has failed to use them to serve our need for discrimination even among these texts—not to speak of the failure to apply these terms with profit to more recent literature. It is true

that certain eras in the history of Sanskrit literature have produced more poetics than poetry, and that the dead weight of traditional poetics managed to suffocate poetic creativity in Sanskrit practically to extinction. But while Aristotle and Longinus continue to serve western literary criticism even today, we in India are unable to put our own heritage of poetics to any use.

Without wishing to be revivalistic in spirit, we shall have to recognize that the tools and measures of literary assessment as evolved in the western world (specifically, in the Graeco-Judaic-Christian tradition) are sometimes inadequate and sometimes wholly irrelevant to the needs of a literary historian when he is dealing with the totality of Indian literature. The western tools and measures begin becoming adequate and relevant in the modern phase, when western thought and literature have begun to influence and re-mould Indian thought and literature. But up to this point (say, the year 1800), India's literary culture was fostered under very different premises. An understanding of these premises is indispensable to our understanding of the literary products of the ante-British period. While it is true that the past must invariably be grasped in terms of the present, we cannot expect to read medieval India in the same light as western historians read medieval Europe. In spite of our training and faith in the western ways, the sources of illumination available to us are quite different. By locating these sources and by uncovering their illumination, the modern literary historian in India may succeed in healing the dissociation of sensibility that has taken place in modern India, most acutely in our critical approach to literature, as the result of western-style education.

To revert to the problem with which this article began, the question 'what is literature?' should probably be asked in a Pontius-Pilate spirit. We need not wait for an answer because, as anybody who has any understanding of literature knows, no final answer is possible. Ronald S. Crane does offer an aside in the course of discussing principles of construction in writing—"the possibilities of variation inherent generally in human discourse viewed as the joint product of reason and speech"<sup>9</sup> — but he also recognizes the inevitability of having to fall back upon the three most commonly used names for literary kinds even if these cannot be defined precisely: namely poetry, drama and fiction. Literary works to which these names can be attached may safely be regarded as literature, and most western literary historians have no difficulty in presuming that these names of literary kinds are widely known and generally understood.

Our peculiar problems as Indians approaching the last quarter of the twentieth century is that the kind of literary presumptions the western scholar



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Our peculiar problems as Indians approaching the last quarter of the twentieth century is that the kind of literary presumptions the western scholar

can make today or has been making for the last two or three centuries was possible for us in the fifth or in the tenth or even in the fifteenth century, but not since then. Krishna Kripalani summarized the problem aptly when he stated : "There were thus three major sources of literary criteria operating in the field, on the eve of the contemporary phase of Indian literature, which may be said to begin in the twenties of this century—the classical Sanskrit, the indigenous regional, and the imported Western."<sup>10</sup> Unless we take the stand that as readers, writers and critics we have wholly and successfully imbibed western literary concepts and traditions, we cannot borrow their critical terms as easily as we borrow their technology. Edward Dimock once made this point in reverse while reviewing a collection of Bengali poems and stories in English translation "I think one must meet these writers on their own grounds, which are not Aristotelian. If one does this, I think he will find a rare lyric quality in their writing."<sup>11</sup>

It is possible to misread in Dimock's cautioning the implication that Indian Literature will be found wanting if it is judged by western standards—wherein lies the further implication that western standards are supreme and universal. In a world dominated by the West, it is difficult to ignore western standards altogether. And in most areas of human achievement we in India continue to be regulated by western approval or disapproval. But if literature is the product of a specific culture, its merits must ultimately be assessed by measures arising from that culture.<sup>12</sup> Our own history demonstrates over and over again the benefits of cross-fertilization of cultures that has embellished our past, but in literature we have somehow hesitated to attempt the grafting of importing modes of literary criticism upon *available* indigenous concepts of literature. The stress on 'available' is essential so that the grafter does not waste his energy in trying to resuscitate dead wood.

At a Mysore University seminar in 1965 devoted to the discussion of European and Indian traditions of literary criticism, C.D. Narashimhaiah had appealed : "We in India ... have for the past few centuries been trying with pathetic earnestness to catch up with other people's yesterdays. If we are not forging ahead and can only catch up with yesterdays, it is time we caught up with our own yesterdays, as even that makes for continuity."<sup>13</sup> Such an attempt is being made—alas, not at any of the universities represented at the above seminar<sup>14</sup>—by A.K. Warder of the University of Toronto in his projected three-volume work *Indian Kavya Literature*, which is aimed at stimulating a new and long overdue evaluation of Indian literature.<sup>15</sup> "It has been an important part of the critical purpose, here proposed, to study the positions of *kāvya* composers in the social and cultural history of

India, a form of literary criticism which has not been seriously attempted before in the case of India," Warder states in his preface, and goes on to explain that he is using the term *kavya* as the equivalent of "literature as art": "It excludes scriptures or religious writing (is therefore essentially secular), histories (except when history is made the subject of art, aiming at aesthetic rather than historical 'truth'), and all technical writings on philosophy, science, the arts and so on."<sup>16</sup> Thus he leaves out the Vedas and also the Mahabharata "since it is regarded as 'history' or 'tradition', *itihāsa*—as a rich source of stories suitable for *kāvya* treatment, e.g., in dramas, but as not in itself *kāvya*," and announces that he will confine himself to five main forms of *kavya* literature. These are: *natya* (drama), *mahakavya* (epic), *khandakavya* (lyric), *akhyayika* (biography), and *katha* (the novel).<sup>17</sup> The first volume of this project deals with the theory and principles of literature as discussed in classical treatises, and we must await the two following volumes to benefit from the project.<sup>18</sup>

Warder's scheme may appear too rigid and dogmatic, especially if it has to leave the Mahabharata out of consideration as a literary text. Also, he could have moved into his second volume straightaway since a number of modern analyses of ancient Indian poetics are already available<sup>19</sup>. But Warder's approach is one solution to our problem of having to decide what will be regarded as literature—until that is solved, we cannot proceed to literary history. How far such an approach will lead us down the centuries is another matter. But it will certainly help us to get round the problems set, for example, by a text like Banabhatta's *Harṣacarita*. Historians have complained that the work stops short of a point beyond which it would have turned out to be a complete and valid document relating to Harsa's reign. But, as V.S. Pathak has argued, "when we study the *Harṣacarita* as a complete whole, organically designed and artistically composed with some specific purpose, these questions become irrelevant and conclusions appear incorrect."<sup>20</sup> According to Pathak, Bana, in composing this work, was exercising the licence of a literary artist rather than obeying the discipline of a social science. This is the kind of judgment that literary history is called upon to make, and such judgments cannot be made unless the literary historian is fully aware of the tradition to which a literary work belongs. Even if the tradition is not in operation today, its prevalence at the time the work came into being cannot be ignored. This search for the useable past in our literary traditions may lead us into a hitherto relatively unexplored domain—the possibility that the aesthetics that governed our literary composition in the past were shared in some measure by other arts such as our sculpture, painting and music (not to speak of dance, which by tradition is part of drama,

hence is already related to literature.)<sup>21</sup> It is customary to relate the aesthetics of Indian art to Indian philosophy and religion. The literary historian may be able to innovate new and alternative approaches to these arts because by necessity he will have to devise large syntheses and inclusive formulations in his attempt to interpret and record the expression in literature of a people who have expressed themselves in other aesthetic forms as well. That is, the universe of aesthetic discourse which has literature as its centre may present a more comprehensive picture of the creative imagination of India than what would be presented if any other art form were to be placed there. Thereby, Rajasekhara's claim would be vindicated that Sahityavidya is the fifth and foremost branch of learning

Pañcanī sāhityavidyā iti Yayāvarīyah. Sā hi  
catasraṃpamāpi vidyānām niṣyandaḥ.....  
śabdārthayoryathavatsāhabhāvena vidyā  
sāhityavidyā.

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- 1 *The History of Indian literature* (English translation Chowkhamba Sanskrit series, 1961), p. 183.
  - 2 *History of Indian Literature*, Vol. I Part I (English translation), 1962, third edition), p. 1
  - 3 Compare, for example, the fifth volume of *A Comprehensive History of India* (1970), sponsored by the Indian History Congress, and the sixth volume of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan project, *The History and Culture of the Indian People* (1960), both devoted to the Delhi Sultanate period. While the former has a full chapter on 'Language and Literature' of the period, the latter pays no attention to such matters. The second volume of *A Comprehensive History*, devoted to the Mauryas and the Satavahanas, has a section on language and literature but includes "Religion and Philosophy" in it. Another kind of aberration may be seen in Chapter VIII of *An Advanced History of India* by Majumdar, Raychaudhuri and Datta, where literature is mentioned along with education of the period under discussion.
  - 4 See P. K. Gode, *Studies in Indian Literary History*, Vol. 3 (Poona : P. K. Gode Coll. ed. Works Publication Committee, 1956).
  - 5 *op. cit.*
  - 6 *Literary Criticism in Ancient India* (Calcutta : Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar), p. 4.
  - 7 *Ibid.*
  - 8 See René Wellek, *Discriminations* (Indian edition, Vikas Publications, 1970), pp. 3-10, for an account of the varying connotations of the term 'literature' in English, French and German.
  - 9 *Critical and Historical Principles of Literary History* (Phoenix Book edition Chicago, 1971), p. 2.
  - 10 "Contemporary Criteria of Literary Criticism" in Leon Edel ed., *Literary History and Literary Criticism* (New York : New York University Press, 1964), p. 182.
  - 11 See *Journal of Asian Studies*, XIX (November 1959), p. 103.

- 12 A conspicuous case is that of the standards of beauty of the female form in India. Our sculptors as well as our poets of the past laid down standards that continue to upheld be inspite of changing standards of this measurement in the West.
- 13 *Literary Criticism : European and Indian Traditions* ed. C.D. Narasi (Mysore : Mysore University, n.d.) p.2.
- 14 At least, such material is not available in English.
- 15 Volume I *Literary Criticism* (Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass, 1972).
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. X.
- 17 It may be recalled that Herbert Gowen had suggested in the chapter on "The Great Epics" in his *History of Indian Literature* (New York and London : D. Appleton & Co., 1931) that all poetical writings which are in the main narrative should be regarded as belonging to the same class of composition, and be distinguished from one another as follows :
  - a. The *Itihasa* or "epic poem proper", a term which is frequently applied only to the Mahabharata, but may serve also for the Ramayana and some later poems.
  - b. The *Puranas* (literally, 'old thing') or mythological poem, dealing with the origin of the world and the generation of the gods.
  - c. The *Tantra* ('ritual'), applied to a numerous class of religious and magical works.
  - d. The *Kavya*, or "poetical piece". The *Kavyas* are, in general, the work of individual poets and are only of moderate length.

Gowen's understanding of the true nature of these texts was deficient, but he had felt the need to employ existing terms.
- 18 According to the jacket-blurb of the first volume the second volume will deal with the older texts and traditions, and the third with the literature of the early medieval period.
- 19 For example : R. C. Dwivedi ed. *Principles of Literary Criticism in Sanskrit* (Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass, 1969) ; K. Krishnamoorthy, *Essays in Sanskrit Criticism* (Dharwar : Karnatak University, 1964) ; Ramaranjan Mukherj op. cit.
- 20 "Ancient Historical Biographies", in *Problems of Historical Writing in Indi* (New Delhi : India International Centre, n.d.), p. 15.  
See Radhakamal Mukerjee, *The Culture and Art of India* (London : George Allen & Unwin, 1959), for a chart which tabulates dynastics, ideas, periods of art, architectural works, authors and thinkers in a chronological order.



We record with a heavy heart the death of Buddhadeva Bose on March 18, 1974. He had just completed the first volume of a profoundly subtle and moving study of the implication of the poetic myth embodied in the *Mahābhārata*. The study involves not only the two Indian epics, but also a number of important western classics both ancient and modern. He was not granted time for using his extensive notes for a proposed second volume which occupied his final days. The completed volume, we understand, is being translated into English.

A great Bengali poet, critic, novelist and playwright, Buddhadeva Bose was also a noted editor and translator. His extensive translations into Bengali from the poetry of Kalidasa, Baudelaire, Hoelderlin and Rilke have been published in four separate volumes. For twentyfive years he edited *Kavita*, the first and most influential journal for *avant garde* modern Bengali poetry and criticism. He also edited two standard anthologies—one of modern Bengali verse (*Adhunik Bangla Kavita*, M.C. Sarkar & Sons Private Ltd., Calcutta, 5th ed. 1973), and the other of translations into English from modern Bengali writing (*An Anthology of Bengali Writing*, The Macmillan Company of India Ltd., 1971). Both the Government and Sahitya Akademi had honoured him as a man of letters, but his true appreciation came from the generation of younger poets and writers who accepted him as a great master of our times. The number of the books he wrote exceeds one hundred and sixty.

We have a deeper sense of loss at his death since, apart from other things, he was the founding Professor and Chairman of this Department of Comparative Literature at Jadavpur, the only such full department on the mainland continent of Asia. This journal was also conceived by him in 1961, and he edited its first three volumes.

He held visiting appointments at a number of Universities in the U.S.A. and lectured on Rabindranath Tagore and on Bengali Literature in many European and Asian countries. Many teachers of this department were his students at one time or another.

We humbly dedicate this volume of *JJCL* to his memory.

*Echoes from Argentina*

From Buenos Aires, Argentina, writes Nadine M.de Aguilar that the 'Centro de Estudios de Literatura Comparada' of the Catholic University of Argentina has published in vol xv (June 1970) of their journal *Universitas* an extensive review of the Baudelaire Number (Vol VII) of *JJCL*. Particular attention has been given to a *Bengali* article in that volume on the impact of Baudelaire on modern Bengali poetry. The author of the article is Manabendra Bandyopadhyay who teaches Comparative Literature at Jadavpur. This is most gratifying. Though we regularly publish one or two articles in Bengali, this is the first time when any serious attempt has been taken to read them outside India. The Argentine editor took the article to the Indian Embassy, where Mr S. P. Chakravarty, an attache, kindly translated the article into Spanish for her benefit. We are happy for this cooperation. Here are some excerpts from the Spanish review

"To accomplish certain of its cultural aims, the Centro de Estudios de Literatura Comparada de la Facultad de Letras de la Pontificia Universidad Catolica Argentina recently started correspondence with similar centres in several countries and different languages with the purpose of exchanging books and magazines"

Among the first to answer our pledge was one of the furthest away the Department of Comparative Literature of Jadavpur University, Calcutta. In a cordial letter, its Director... expresses his wish 'to keep windows on the world open' and, at the same time, asked for information about the study of Comparative Literature in Argentina and South America in general. He has sent us number 7 of *JJCL* which the Department publishes annually. In that volume, Jadavpur University pays homage to Baudelaire on the centenary of his death.

Of all the articles...one stands out for its originality 'Baudelaire and the Bengali poets' by Manabendra Bandyopadhyay. Studying the contemporary careers of two poets (sic), born with a year's difference: Baudelaire, the father of French modern literature, in 1921, and Vidhyasagar, father of Bengali prose, in 1820, and the political, sociological, and cultural circumstances prevailing in the country where they lived, the author proves that Baudelaire's writings were forbidden fruit in Bengal during the XIXth century and even at the beginning of the XXth. A new era begins with the work of Buddhadeva Bose, a Bengali writer born in 1908, considered the master of the modern Bengali poets. His favourite subjects are the conflicts between flesh and spirit, the search of art, the artist's place in the modern world, the artist's freedom: all these themes made possible for Buddhadeva Bose to discover Baudelaire. He felt in him the echoes of his own ideas, and with

more than fifteen years of sustained effort he made translations from Baudelaire's works so that they seemed spontaneously written in Bengali. As a result of the change in the social and cultural atmosphere of Bengal, Baudelaire was able to transmit his message, through Buddhadeva Bose's translation, to a whole generation of young Bengali writers whose work suddenly changed from that moment on. ..."

We thank Nadine M.de Aguilar for sending us this translation of the original review.

*Eng. Lit. & Comp. Lit. :*

Here is an interesting record of research work done in English (Comparative?) Literature by Indian scholars at home and abroad :

- 1 'Shakespearean Tragedy through Indian Eyes'/C. N. Menon. D.Litt., Madras, 1929.
- 2 'Beowulf and the Ramayana'/Isaac S. Peter. Ph.D., London, 1930. (Published by John Bale, London, 1932).
- 'The Indian Theatre Its Origin and its Later Developments Under European influence with Special Reference to Western India'/R. K. Yajnik. Ph.D., London, 1931. (Published as *The Indian Theatre*. Allen & Unwin, 1933).
- 4 'Platonic Ideas in Spenser'/Mohini Mohan Bhattacharjee. Ph.D., Calcutta, 1932. (Published by Longmans Green, 1935).
- 'Mysticism in Poetry, with an Illustrative Study of A.E., W. B. Yeats, and Rabindranath Tagore'/Abinash Chandra Bose. Ph.D., Dublin, 1937. (Published as *Three Mystic Poets*. Kolhapur, 1945).
- 6 'Some Eastern Influence on William Blake's Prophetic Works'/Piloo Nanavatty. M.Litt., Cambridge, 1938.
- 'Symbolism in Modern Drama'/K. C. Bhatnagar. Ph.D., Punjab, 1944.
- 8 'Influence of Western Drama on Modern Hindi Drama'/D. K. L. Srivastava. D.Phil., Allahabad, 1951.
- 'W. B. Yeats and Occultism A Study of His Work in Relation to Indian Lore, the Cabbala, Swedenborg, Boehme and Theosophy'/Haribans Rai Bachchan. Ph.D., Cambridge, 1954. (Published as *W. B. Yeats & Occultism*. Motilal Banarsidas, 1965).
- 'Traces of Oriental Mysticism in the Poetry of the English Romantic Revival'/Kameshwar Prasad Ambastha. Ph.D., Edinburgh, 1956.

- 'The Influence of Psychology on English Fiction, 1920-1940'/  
Kumar. Ph.D., Panjab, 1957.
- 'Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel'/Shiv. K. Kumar.  
Ph.D., Cambridge, 1958. (Published as *Bergson and the Stream  
of Consciousness Novel*. Blackie, London, 1962).
- 'Whitman and Indian Thought'/V. K. Chari. Ph.D., Banaras,  
1960. (Published as *Whitman in the Light of Vedantic Mysticism*.  
Nebraska Univ. Press, 1964).
- 'The Concept of Comedy: -A Restatement'  
Ph.D., Karnatak. 1961.
- 'E. M. Forster and India'/K. G. Eapen. Ph.D., Colorado, 1962.
- 'Influence of English on Gujarati Poetry'/U. M. Maniar. Ph.D.,  
Boroda, 1962.
- 'Aesthetic Enjoyment Its Background in Philosophy and  
Medicine'/Ramendra Kumar Sen. D.Litt., Calcutta, 1962.
- 18 'Subjective Trend in the Plays of W. B. Yeats and Rabindranath  
Tagore'/Pranabendu DasGupta. Ph.D., Minnesota, 1963.
- 'The Indian Element in Modern English Literature'/B. P. Mi  
D.Litt., Lucknow, 1963.
- 'The Reception of Rabindranath Tagore in the United States,  
1912-1941'/Sujit Kumar Mukherjee. Ph.D., Pennsylvania, 1963.  
(Published as *Passage to America*. Calcutta, 1964).
- 'The Impact of Leopardi on English Poetry'/Ghanashyam Singh.  
Ph.D., Rajasthan, 1963.
- 'T.S. Eliot and the Classical Tradition in English Criticism'/  
Sourindranath Mitra. D.Phil., Calcutta, 1964.
- 'Machiavelli in Christopher Marlowe and George Chapman'/  
Mitter. D.Phil., Calcutta, 1964.
- 'The Influence of Hindu and Buddhist Thought on Aldous Huxley'/  
Nanda Kumar Pandey. Ph.D., Stanford, 1964.
- 'The Reception of Rabindranath Tagore in England, France,  
Germany and the United States'/Navaneeta Dev (Sen). Ph.D.,  
Indiana, 1964.
- 'Comitism in the Novels of George Eliot'/Thakur Guruprasad.  
Ph.D., Gorakhpur, 1965.
- 'Walt Whitman and Tantrism A Comparative Study'/Manohar  
Namdeo Wankhade. Ph.D., Florida, 1965.
- 28 'Skelton and Aristotle: A Study of the Tragic View in  
*Magnyfycence*'/Dhriti Kanta Lahiri Choudhury. Ph.D., Leeds,  
1966.

- 29 'Kipling's India'/Kranti Kumar Singh. Ph.D., London, 1966.  
 30 'Sakuntala, Uttara-Ramacharita, Cymbeline and The Winter's Tale  
 A Comparative Study in Tragi-Comic Structure'/ Amiya Dev.  
 Ph.D., Indiana, 1967.

We never thought Comp. Lit. had made so many converts. Why then are not our students (Comp. Lit). encouraged to teach Eng. Lit. as most of these scholars are currently doing? Is this a new form of the Caste System? So late in history?

*Nabaneeta Dev Sen reports*

(a) The VIIth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association (August 12-15 in Montreal, and 16-19 at Ottawa) concentrated on the following themes A. The Literatures of the Americas : dependence, independence, interdependence ; B. Comparative Literature and modern literary scholarship (the ways of articulating & periodizing the process of history in Comparative Literature/the contribution of cultural anthropology to Comparative Literature Studies/the concept of value in Comparative Literature). Dr Nabaneeta Dev Sen participated from this Department and was elected a member of the Executive Bureau. Professor Horst Frenz of Indiana, an old friend of this Department, is the new President of ICLA.

(b) The annual meeting of the ICLA Bureau, at Innsbruck in March 1974, agreed on the following themes for the next ICLA Congress to be held in Budapest in August 1976 : (1) Three epoch-making changes in the history of literatures in European languages (historical, ideological, aesthetic and other characteristics of change in the literary process during the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and early Twentieth Century). (2) Twentieth century relations between literatures originating in different cultures the emergence of new national literatures and their role in the evolution of World Literature. (3) Comparative Literature and Theory of Literature Historical, Structural, Semiotic, Stylistic, Sociological and other approaches.

(c) *New Journals* : In winter 1974 has been published from Toronto the first number of the *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*. Its object is to provide a forum for scholars engaged in the study of literature from both an international and an interdisciplinary point of view. 'Voices from different countries and disparate critical languages will be heard, confronted, and integrated' in a new journal from Tel Aviv : *PTL* (Poetics and Theory of Literature). Sponsoring scholars cover every part of the world.

(d) At Bratislava the Staat Academy organized a twoday seminar (March 1975) on Comparative Literature on the occasion of the annual Bureau meeting of the ICLA. Czechoslovak scholars talked on the problems of translation and on 'Comparative Literature in Czechoslovakia'. Bureau members, including Dr. Dev Sen, participated in the discussions.

\*

*JJCL will cost more*

All costs have gone up. A copy of *JJCL* from this number will cost Rs. 12.50/\$3.00/90d. Subscribers, kindly bear with us.

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS

*Rev. Robert Antoine, S. J.*, teaches Comparative Literature at Jadavpur. His article should be read as a complement of his article "Calliope and the Epic of Ravana" published in *JJCL* 11. These articles form part of his monograph *Rama and the Bards : Epic Memory in the Ramayana* to be published by Writers Workshop, 162/92 Lake Gardens, Calcutta 700 045.

*Nabaneeta Dev Sen* read her paper at the 7th ICLA Conference held in Montreal and Ottawa in 1973. She read another paper on the concept of leadership in the works of Rabindranath Tagore at a seminar at the School of Oriental & African Studies in London. She also teaches Comparative Literature at Jadavpur and is a member of the Executive Bureau of the ICLA.

Professor *A. G. Stock* has now gone back to U.K. after years of teaching in Indian and African Universities. Her paper is based on a seminar talk she gave in this department. Recently she spent further two years as a visiting Professor at Dacca University in Bangladesh. Green Book House Ltd., Dacca, has published in 1973 her latest book called *Memoirs of Dacca University : 1947-1951*.

*R. K. Kaul* is the Professor and Chairman of the Department of English at Rajasthan University, Jaipur.

Of the two Bengali articles, the first one is by *Swapan Majumdar* of this Department of Comparative Literature. The article is on the 19th century Bengali epistles by Michael Madhusudan Datta and the probable western models he had in mind. The other Bengali article on Moliere's impact on Bengali comedies since the middle of the 19th century is by another teacher of Comparative Literature at Jadavpur, *Subir RoyChoudhury*. A longish excerpt from a little known discourse on the French dramatist by Rabindranath Tagore, in 1922, has been quoted in a note to this article.

*Damayanti Ghosh* (nee Bose), an old student of this department, now teaches in a graduate college in Kanpur. Her paper is a part of her doctoral dissertation for Indiana University.

*Sujit Mukherjee* studied in the United States, taught at Indian University, and is now with the Orient Longmans, Delhi. His article on the problem of writing a history of literature in India is the first of a series on the subject to be printed in this journal. He is the author of *Passage to America* (1964) on the reception of Tagore in the United States, 1912-1941.





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NABANEETA DEV SEN

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in the East and in the West :  
A Comparative Study*

A. G. STOCK

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SWAPAN MAJUMDAR

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